

JOURNAL AND POEMS

OTHER BOOKS BY SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

Readings in Vedic Literature
A Handbook for Krishna Consciousness
He Lives Forever
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Under the Banyan Tree
Journal and Poems (Book One)

Book 2

JOURNAL AND POEMS

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PREFACE

THE ABSOLUTE CRITERIA for success in any endeavor is whether Lord Kṛṣṇa is pleased by what you do. If the Supreme Personality of Godhead is satisfied by your work, then it is successful; and if He is not pleased, then you have failed. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states this criteria as follows:

*ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā
varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ
svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya
saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*

O best among the twice-born, it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's occupation according to caste divisions and orders of life is to please the Personality of Godhead.

—*Bhāg.* 1.2.13

Similarly, the negative injunction is also given: *śrama eva hi kevalam*, everything is useless unless you please Kṛṣṇa.

In a godless age, most people do not know that the goal of life is to satisfy the Supreme Personality. Political leaders, welfare workers, philanthropists, and artists are ignorant of the ultimate purpose of all activity. Most people would judge a book devoted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness as something intended only for a very limited sectarian audience. Things are so upside down that when we present this most expansive knowledge of the Supreme, others regard us as narrow-minded and sectarian.

It is lamentable that the vast majority of people live in ignorance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Due to this ignorance, they are revolving in the wheel of repeated birth and death without relief. It is therefore the responsibility of the devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to print and distribute literatures glorifying Kṛṣṇa and so dispel this ignorance. As Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder-

ācārya of ISKCON, writes in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, "... we always request members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness to publish as many books as possible and distribute them widely throughout the world" (purport, Cc. *Madhya*, 19.133).

Lord Kṛṣṇa is pleased when His devotee sings the praises of the Lord and distributes knowledge of love of God. Kṛṣṇa does not need or desire our praise in a selfish way, but to glorify Him is actually for the good of all humanity. We are all parts and parcels of God but have forgotten this, and Kṛṣṇa wants us to return to Him. In order to bring this about, He incarnates into the world or sends His representatives—the spiritual master and pure devotees.

For literature to be truly transcendental, it cannot be merely speculative but has to be directed by the spiritual master, who guides the disciple according to the principles of scripture. Even the literary incarnation of God, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, received direct guidance from his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, about how to form literature that is most pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, and only then did he depict Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in this world. Bona fide Vedic literatures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are not ordinary literatures; they are the absolute literary guides for mankind. They contain the words of God and are not different from God. Therefore, we have to take guidance from the pure devotee who comes as the spiritual master. He is expert to guide us so that our work is satisfying to Kṛṣṇa.

Although Vyāsadeva compiled numerous literatures about Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, there remains a great need for Kṛṣṇa conscious books in the present age. We see, for example, how young people growing up in ISKCON crave literature. Even after hearing *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* they look for more adventures, poems, etc. So different literatures based on the *śāstras* should be compiled by each Kṛṣṇa conscious generation as the movement spreads around the world by the mercy of Lord Caitanya. But all literature must conform to the non-speculative standard of pleasing Kṛṣṇa and *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas. And just as Śrīla Vyāsadeva felt satisfaction only after compiling

the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on the order of his spiritual master, so too can today's Kṛṣṇa conscious authors become self-satisfied only by satisfying Kṛṣṇa under the direction of our spiritual master. This will occur when we directly glorify the Lord in accordance with authorized scriptures and our own realization. And although the masses of people in Kali-yuga may not appreciate such literatures, these will nevertheless have the best effect on people everywhere who are sincerely seeking the truth. As the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement spreads by all its various preaching activities, such literature will be read more and more by the generations, and thus the authors of Kṛṣṇa conscious literatures will feel great satisfaction as Kṛṣṇa and His devotees become pleased.

So I wish to submit *Journal and Poems* with the prayer that it be found acceptable by the devotees and by my spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me to write books to help crippled humanity, but I cannot claim to be a preacher empowered to do this. I have tried to present the life and teachings of the empowered teacher, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I will continue to try to serve as his instrument, remembering his activities in his spoken and written words and trying to exemplify his teachings. *Journal and Poems* is my on-going attempt to present this in a personal way and to show in the life of a lowly devotee the purifying process of *bhakti-yoga*. This chronicle also reports the progress of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and its struggles with external and internal obstacles to bring about the Golden Age predicted by Lord Caitanya. My hope is that *Journal and Poems* will inspire, strengthen, and give solace to those saintly persons who are following Śrīla Prabhupāda and working hard to spread his movement. And I hope that it may spare the growing generations from turning to nonsense literatures which are devoid of Kṛṣṇa and are therefore without value.

1

July 1

Now that the retired cows and oxen are living in the woods, I see them regularly wherever I go. They like to come near the cabin where the overflow of the pond trickles down into a muddy stream they drink from. Unlike the deer, they move slowly, staring back at you curiously and unafraid, since they have been cared for all their lives by the cowherdsmen.

Visitors to the farm are sometimes startled to hear we have put the cows deep in the woods, as if it's a hardship on the herd. But the cows don't mind it. Within a few days they have beaten down comfortable trails, and they roam freely, eating the wild grasses and overhead leaves with plenty of streams to drink from. Now instead of only the rare sight of deer flashing, running, and hiding, I see these retired cows whenever I walk on the back path, or I hear them crackling through the dense underbrush. One of the devotees remarked that the cows had come down here just to see me, since so many of them often gather quite close to the cabin. Of course they haven't come down to be with me, yet they see as much of me as any other person. We are similar in that they are not active workers, not milk-givers or plough-pullers. But my retirement is temporary, whereas they are being allowed to pass their last days in leisure. Just to see them in this state eases the mind with appreciation for Vedic culture, wherein even old animals are treated with compassion.

There's one bird that comes in the evening who outclasses all the rest. I can give a fair imitation of his sound, but I can only describe it as like the notes from a panpipe. His timing, coming at the end of day, is like the last tinkling notes of a classical piano composition. The devotees who live in the cabin know this bird is my favorite, and now we are attempting to actually identify him and see him. He likes to sing high in the treetops, and so far they haven't been able to sight him. Their guess is that he's the evening thrush. The name isn't so important, since even now as

soon as he arrives we perk up and say, "That bird!"

July 2

The Āyur Vedic doctor is gone, leaving me with a half-promise that in two months I may change for the better as a result of this treatment. The imposed restrictions are over, and I may move about as I like, except when I am physically unable to do so. I remain mostly confined, getting too many headaches. What next? They say I should change my diet. But the real problem is that this body is a lump of ignorance and the senses are networks of paths unto death. And yet for the sake of service, I'm willing to try new experiments. The body is doomed, yet it is meant to do good for others and not to lie around in a sickroom.

My favorite song nowadays is Prabhupāda singing, "*nārada-muni, bājāya vīṇā*." I play it over and over again. This sound is sweeter than any bird, deeper than the thunder, and more comforting than the rain on the roof. Partly the song is wonderful because it's about Nārada Muni, and partly it's wonderful because of the way the lines are composed, but mostly because it's Prabhupāda singing. Lately I have been lamenting that my very personal feelings for Śrīla Prabhupāda are weak and distant, but this *bhajana* is very soothing and close.

July 3

After taking my bath I suddenly felt very nauseated. Sweat popped out on my forehead and I had to sit down until it passed. But even when physically low, there are waves of optimism. For example, when I was forced to sit on the bathroom floor from nausea, I overheard devotees talking in the other room, using my name respectfully. I thought to myself, "Why am I suffering so much? It may be that I have falsely taken some position of guruship out of pride, and this is some kind of reaction." These humiliating mental states that come during points of intense physical suffering have a cleansing effect on the mind. I don't think it should be considered masochism or artificial self-berating.

Nearby thunder. Heavy downpour. Devotees run to close the

windows on the porch. Everything is ideal. I lie back and rest. I'm ill but I'm not confused.

Thinking of Kṛṣṇa in the rain—when there were sudden storms, He used to take shelter with His friends in a cave and share lunch and talk until the rains were over.

July 4

Big preaching events in our zone this week. Today in Washington, D.C., while maybe a million people gather around the monuments, our devotees have set up festival booths and will distribute *kīrtana*, *prasādam*, and books. I hope all goes well with our brave attempt to wave the spiritual banner on this day when most people are indulging in worship of land and the body. The day after tomorrow, the devotees will hold an even larger festival on the boardwalk at Atlantic City with a Jagan-nātha Ratha-yātrā parade and full festival right in front of the gambling casinos. In both these cities, as well as in dozens of cities throughout the world, ISKCON devotees are working at a marathon pace, with strong faith that if a *karmī* takes just a piece of *prasādam* or gives a favorable glance at the Deity, he can be saved from the greatest danger. And this faith is not blind, because when a devotee engages in this transcendental distribution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he feels reciprocation from Kṛṣṇa, which is the most uplifting, liberating energy in all the worlds.

While I sit here and talk about it, they are actually doing it. But at the end of this month, we will have our own farm festival, which hundreds of devotee-soldiers may attend and feel the bliss of association at peaceful Gītā-nāgarī. Just yesterday Tārksya called from Trinidad and said eleven devotees are coming up. I have already announced that I will hold initiation for disciples, and so my main concentration should be to gain at least enough strength to take part in the festival on July 27.

While hearing the activities of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, I think how presumptuous I am to call myself a devotee. Humility (thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street and offering respect to others without expecting respect in return) and renunciation of material comforts and

a great love for chanting the holy name were his ideal qualities, which made him dear to Lord Caitanya and all the devotees. Raghunātha Gosvāmī is the personification of Lord Caitanya's verse, *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena*, and unless we follow his example, we cannot chant the holy name of the Lord constantly. Granted that humility and renunciation may take different appearances in the modern age, we should never think for a moment that Raghunātha Gosvāmī's example has become outdated. Our modernizations of his behavior should not become exact opposites of his inner qualities. Otherwise, why did Lord Caitanya point out Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to all His associates as a person to be loved and followed by all?

Illness

Butterflies in tiger lilies,
silent backyard *japa*,
cobwebs on my bike.

While walking in the garden, I thought of different sayings how one can find happiness without traveling, or without making extraordinary endeavor. I think there are Buddhist sayings which describe this. "Why should you look/ for treasure a-broad?/ Within yourself you/ have a bright pearl!" There's also an old popular song, "True happiness lies/ right under your eyes/ back in your own backyard." But I also thought of the transcendental reason why a devotee travels. In my case, since I am confined to stay at home, I should certainly try to find Kṛṣṇa consciousness in my backyard. But of course, there's no question of "finding" spiritual truth unless one is fortunate enough to contact the spiritual master. And once one contacts a spiritual master, and becomes initiated, he should take on the duty of helping others in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For this he may travel.

The concept of "happiness in the backyard" is a consolation for me at present, and it is true only because I have the real fortune of associating with Śrīla Prabhupāda. But the knowledge he has given me is not meant to be kept in my own little acre. Prahāda Mahārāja states, yes, I am happy wherever I sit down, but what about all the poor fools who live in illusion in the big

cities? If I remained here just to be a peaceful, poetic hermit, that would be my sense gratification. But now I can hardly travel into the backyard from my bed. Therefore, as a by-product to this physical breakdown, Kṛṣṇa is consoling me: "Listen to the birds," He says. "Look at the bright grass. This is My picture. Enjoy it and describe it nicely."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami phoned from Hong Kong and talked with Baladeva. He was thinking of coming to visit me, but when he heard how I was indisposed he decided not to disturb me. Gurudeva gave his opinion that my illness is a completely spiritual matter under Kṛṣṇa's control.

I often meet rabbits while walking, and I usually describe them sarcastically as stupid and fearful when I discuss it later with the devotees. Some of the rabbits can't seem to see or hear me approach and don't move an inch even as I step right by their tails. I know they are actually very frightened of me, and that I could easily kill them, yet they seem unaware. Even if I say, "Hut!" they just jump a few feet into the underbrush as if they think they are now safe. Perhaps they feel familiar toward me, but I think the real case is that they are either scared stiff, or their senses are giving them no protection from the imminent danger. I keep deriding the behavior of these rabbits and don't see any good quality in their vulnerability. But just now, thinking it over, I thought of how one could appreciate the rabbits' helplessness.

Sometimes we see great pure devotees also live in a similar state of helplessness in terms of their complete dependence on Kṛṣṇa. It was in that mood that Draupadī finally gave up trying to protect herself and depended on Kṛṣṇa. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also prays to Kṛṣṇa, "You may destroy me or save me as You like." When I am walking by, the rabbits seem to take that attitude, "Destroy me or save me as you like." So as Prabhupāda advises us to see the good lessons in nature, I think that the rabbits may teach me complete dependence on Kṛṣṇa, even in the face of death.

Śrīla Prabhupāda used to compare the pure devotee to a sold

animal who has no need to concern himself with being maintained or abused; the sold-out animal is simply at the mercy of its master. *Mārobi rākhobi—yo icchā tohārā/ nitya-dāsa prati tuyā adhikārā*: “Slay me or protect me as You wish, for You are the master of Your eternal servant” (“Mānasa Deha Geḥa,” from *Śaraṇāgati*). *Māre kṛṣṇa rākhe ke, rākhe kṛṣṇa māre ke*: “If Kṛṣṇa saves, then no one can kill, and if Kṛṣṇa wants to kill, then no one can save.”

Request to gurus for their instruction:

Rabbit, teach me helplessness.

Bhīma the sheepdog, teach me barking bravery (as when you ran down the bank to chase off the cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking canoers).

Trees and meadows, teach me tolerance.

Bees, teach me honey-tasting.

Birds, please teach me inspired Kṛṣṇa songs.

Creek, teach me to flow, twigs, teach me to bend, and rocks, teach me to resist.

Skies, please teach me of the reflection of the glow from Kṛṣṇa’s body.

Ants, teach me to organize. Flowers, teach me to bloom.

All nature’s gurus, I beg of you, please teach me of Kṛṣṇa in all things, and how to serve Him selflessly.

Memos

My worry! My body!

When will I be free?

“Sounds like you’re griping here,”
marks my editor in red pen.

The smiling apostate
from the witness stand
claimed,

“Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, I
was like a dog chasing its tail.”
Now he’s seducing women

misusing the name of Christ.

Squatters' rights—
 "I saw her first!"
 The bullfrog bellers.

Everything is in Kṛṣṇa
 in its own way,
 even the glowworm.
 But I can only see it
 now and then.

July 7

There is at present a flurry of agitation over my condition, with contesting medical views causing me some confusion. I cannot pretend to fully understand anyone's medical science, whether the spiritual healer, the Āyur Vedic, or the allopathic. They're all full of mysteries and probably mistakes also. My plan continues basically the same, to depend on Kṛṣṇa for everything, but to work with reasonable medical practices in order to try and get well. Prabhupāda explains that Kṛṣṇa never told Arjuna just to sit back and that Kṛṣṇa would do everything. Arjuna had to fight, but the result would be victorious because of Kṛṣṇa. So part of my fighting at present is to try to follow different medical practices.

I thought Āyur Vedic would be the most like Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but it's full of many strange and bitter potions and treatments. All I can do is say, "Śrī Viṣṇu," and swallow and submit with blind faith.

I have set up my perpetual votive light on a small separate altar with Lord Nṛsiṃha and Śrīla Prabhupāda. My prayer is for the spread of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide and for my own participation in the preaching.

In bed all day, I finally emerged in the evening to use the out-house. A garter snake wriggled past me on the gravel and snuggled out of sight in the dirt beside the cabin. His sudden

appearance made me freeze in my tracks, but then I proceeded. At the door of the outhouse, I thought someone might be inside, but it was only the noise of a dead leaf scraping on the floor. The pure devotee would have thought of Kṛṣṇa at every step.

If Death

If anyone tries to beam in
at the light by my bed
he'll find Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva
is protecting my head.
And if death draws near
or hospital fear
I'll finger my beads
and pray to attain
attachment to the Names.

July 8

The next few days are to be seriously devoted to recovery. I am at a status where there are constant headaches, and they are barely checked by my medicine. If I deteriorate further, it will be an emergency. Therefore, in this record, I should not make vain utterances—at any time, but especially now. My humble service should be to cooperate for recovery.

Baladeva is doing a tremendous amount of my personal work with devotees in the zone. But he's afraid that if I hear the slightest news I may get a headache. Nowadays, that's the case. I just walked into the outer room to get a vase and heard Baladeva on the phone. "Well, he wasn't conclusive," Baladeva said, "because of the other topic." I got my vase and left the room wondering, "Who is he talking about? Conclusive? The other topic?"

I go back to my room with red begonias for Lord Nṛsiṁha's altar and sit down, trying to get through the day without too deep a dip. I'm coming near the end of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The hearing is also limited, both by my devotion and by my endurance.

Prabhupada is eternally singing, “jaya rādhe, jaya kṛṣṇa, jaya vṛndāvana.” If I can only understand!

I feel like getting better. I don’t want to die (too young and unaccomplished), and I don’t want to go into the hospital (at the mercy of the nondevotees). So what alternative do I have? I feel like getting better.

I’m hearing the end of *Antya-līlā*, while in some physical discomfort. Lord Caitanya in His madness of love of Kṛṣṇa evinced extraordinary bodily symptoms which sometimes appeared like madness, pain, and disease. He would stay awake at night, and in the mood of a *gopī* put His arms around either Svarūpa Dāmodara or Rāmānanda Rāya and talk just like Rādhārāṇī to one of Her dear friends, inquiring about the whereabouts of Kṛṣṇa.

As a neophyte devotee, I am still struggling with the first lesson, “You’re not this body.” I am tasting the regret of sense gratification which leads to acquiring a material body. Everyone goes through the same distress I am going through now, sooner or later. We are attacked either in the head or in the foot or in the heart or in the liver or in the back, or the toe or the wing or the paw or the stem.

My disciples living with me tenderly help me through these days. Our discussions are more of my bodily condition than of Kṛṣṇa. We count how many pills I take a day, and we follow the logic of different treatments, and how I may go from worse to better. It is not very elevated talk but there is *bhakti*. They are true disciples, trying to help their spiritual master repair his body so that he may return to serve. In that sense, even these talks and this routine are spiritual.

And for elevated spiritual life, I hear *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

JULY WALK

There are imprints of feet in the mud and imprints of tractor tires. Flies buzzing around the ears, the familiar whining sound of the little mosquitoes. The gravel path so carefully laid down for my vigorous daily walk is now overgrown with grasses. I see

the summer path ahead as a mostly indistinguishable bunch of greenery. Butterflies—some bright orange-and-black and some yellow.

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, in the chapter “The Transcendental Madness of Lord Caitanya,” the *gopīs* consider the trees to be male and the little plants to be female. They decided that neither trees nor plants would tell them the secret of whether Kṛṣṇa had passed by. The trees, being male, would favor Kṛṣṇa and keep His secret, and the creepers, being Kṛṣṇa’s maidservants, would also not reveal His whereabouts to the poor, seeking *gopīs*. A botanist might say that the *gopīs*’ consideration of trees as male and creepers as female is fanciful, but what does a botanist know of Vṛndāvana?

I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa like a mumbling sleepwalker. It is my conditioned state. A devotee knows he’s not this body.

Black-eyed Susans fill the rough fields, and dry teasles, nice for arranging in vases before the Lord. Bunches of tiny daisy fleabane on tall weedy stems have been blooming for over a month, taking their time.

While I was eating lunch today, a disciple of mine who is visiting here casually told me that he regularly listens to another *guru*’s tapes. Hearing this, I fell into a mood of jealousy. Later, I tried chanting *japa*, but could only think of my disciple’s words.

Jealous heart,
you want to possess
disciples’ love,
but what will you
give in return?
Can you deliver them
back to Kṛṣṇa?

“If you love me, I will love you,” said Prabhupāda to me, but the small jealous heart says, “You love me first, and love only

me.” What place have such emotions in the pure exchange of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Of course, on the topmost spiritual stage, jealousy exists in relation to Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā has Her camp, Candrāvalī has hers. Satyabhāmā has jealous feelings towards Kṛṣṇa, and so does Rukmiṇī. And in the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, Jagadānanda Paṇḍita was about to hit the revered Sanātana Gosvāmī with a cooking pot when he thought he detected that Sanātana cared for another *sannyāsī* aside from Lord Caitanya. But I should not imitate these transcendental jealousies. I should give the little bit I have freely. I might ask for pure return of love, but I should accept whatever is sincerely returned. With time, maybe my disciple will love me more and I will be able to give him more, and be better able to tolerate the imperfections.

I think I am in a precarious condition. Yet when we phoned my doctor, Advaita Ācārya, he was unavailable because he was all day in the operating room at his hospital. That means a patient was cut open at the chest and under surgery for hours.

Meanwhile, I’m hearing Prabhupāda on a tape, speaking from the *Bhagavad-gītā*: that one who is learned doesn’t lament for the body in any condition. Prabhupāda points out that Arjuna was perplexed but Kṛṣṇa was smiling. Prabhupāda compares this to a man who is sleeping and imagines a tiger is attacking him while another man looks on smiling, “Where’s the tiger?” For one who knows the soul there is never distress. And this is only the beginner’s knowledge.

Anyway, I have to take my case seriously. I have supposedly surrendered my body to the service of Kṛṣṇa, therefore I have to seriously tend to it in its somewhat crisis state. I must try to advance by patiently restraining outward activities so that I can gradually reduce medicines. It is more devotional for me at present to accept the apparently ignominious service of lying down and avoiding all strain.

On the same 1968 tape, I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda give a great

sigh (like a sigh of exhaustion). He had been lecturing for about an hour, and while answering an intricate question about Jesus Christ, he gave this sigh. He immediately went on speaking the answer, but I began to appreciate a little how much Prabhupāda gave himself to push on this mission, starting at the age of seventy. This particular sigh was given in 1968, with still almost ten more years to go of pushing and striving with his so-called aged body in the impossible task of single-handedly directing the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement worldwide. I thought, "All the demigods must worship this sigh of Prabhupāda in the midst of his devotional labor. And it must be very pleasing to Lord Caitanya."

July 10

Amid the flurry of possible engagements, I remind myself, "Remember your serious business: to get well." And that thought reminds me to go deeper still, "Remember your *real* business: to remember Kṛṣṇa."

Right now, it seems like the greatest thing that could happen to me would be for my headaches to go away. It would be a miraculous event if that happened any time in the near future. Yet I should not pray for this or consider it to be the goal of my life. Because even if I were free of headaches, as long as I am in this body, more danger and breakdown will come. I do yearn for a time when I can get some material relief so that I might serve in my post in ISKCON, yet I have to remember that the even higher priority is to attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Baladeva came back from the meeting of temple presidents in our Mid-Atlantic/ New England zone. They handled a full agenda of managerial problems, including legal suits against ISKCON, marriage disputes, accusations of misbehavior, and other heavy items—the essence of what Prabhupāda called "taking a headache for Kṛṣṇa." Each temple president is already under great pressure in his own temple, and now they have

taken on more. I feel very relieved that they are working with me, and at the same time I feel increased determination to rejoin them. At least today, however, I became physically decreased just to hear of the problems.

To keep intact a pure spiritual movement in the age of Kali is *almost* impossible. But it is possible by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and the previous ācāryas. The different problems are passing through my mind, and it occurs to me that I must definitely make all effort to resume the position given to me by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Within the next few days I have to make decisive statements on each of the problems handled by the Zonal Management Committee. It would be better to die trying to manage than to give it up and become a mere poet or writer. Let me write, but out of experiences gained in the field assigned to me. My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please let me return to work.

"I was just thinking, maybe I'm a *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I just saw a little bird outside, and I was watching his spritely movements and thinking that actually he was being spritely for Kṛṣṇa."

"But that doesn't make you a *mahā-bhāgavata*, does it?"

"Well, a *mahā-bhāgavata* thinks that everyone is serving Kṛṣṇa except himself."

"Yes, that's a nice thought, but what about all the other thoughts you have? What about all your dreams? Are they the dreams of a *mahā-bhāgavata*?"

"You're right. I forgot. I'm fallen."

"But tell me about the bird."

July 12, 7:00 P.M.

TALKING ABOUT A BIRD

Tonight I heard the evening thrush and he didn't sound as sweet as usual; I thought maybe it wasn't his fault but mine;

now after an hour he again sounds sweet. What was lacking was that chiming effect; and now I can hear it.

Vedic literatures often describe the *cakora* bird which sings waiting for the raindrops. The *cakoras* are often compared to pure devotees who only depend on Kṛṣṇa. This evening's birds are like that. It's about to rain, and they are singing just before it comes.

My candle is lit,
the thunder is on.
Fingering my beads,
measuring the aches.
Hearing the bee,
waiting for rain;
back to chanting.

We just saw the film segments of Prabhupāda, *Ācārya* Part V. It leaves an emotional impact which makes me want to take an inventory of my activities based on Prabhupāda's presence. With that in view I thought that Prabhupāda wouldn't object to something like "a diary of a devotee" if it could be used for preaching. He would certainly want me to keep up my regular G.B.C. duties. I think he would also approve of the Zonal Management Committee that we are forming. Maybe this is just myself approving myself, yet when I checked myself I felt that Prabhupāda wasn't disapproving.

July 13

The cold, foggy morning makes many cobwebs visible on the ground. Everywhere I look there are dozens of flat silver tents in the underbrush. It's a case of suddenly noticing what's already there.

Last night before sleep I uttered my new prayer: "Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please let me return to work." I realized this means I am praying for the determination, the will to fight. A devotee should pray like that, not "let me go to Your abode" but

“let me work for You.” But then I stopped the new prayer in favor of the excellent old *mahā-mantra*. I think maybe there is something wrong about my asking Him. Just chant. Ask to remember Him and be His devotee.

Today the creek is so shallow the Saturday canoers can barely scrape by. Lizard tail plants grow up with leaves above the water. It is two weeks before the Ratha-yātrā festival here. I’m thinking of spiritual names for those to be initiated and planning how I will get through all the extra-stress activities of the day. I should be able to rise to the occasion.

7:00 P.M.

Out walking. Is it the beauty of this time of day or is it that my head is actually clearing? Prabhupāda has said that the material world is also the kingdom of God. It is the condemned portion, but sometimes from here also we see *Vaikuṇṭha*. The woods are very thick and greeny. First I heard and then I saw retired cows crackling and munching through the thickets. At the end of the private path where the meadow clears I found yellow daisies, milkweed, and delicate orange jewelweed all blooming. I picked one of each, with a strong sense that they are actually *samples*. I felt as if I were in a picture. Feeling myself enchanted by the atmosphere, I also restrained my mind and remembered what a savage place this world is, where at every step there is danger. The *Bhagavad-gītā* also advises us not to be too jubilant or to lament within this world. At any rate, everything should be in relation to Kṛṣṇa.

Let the pleasure and enchantment I am feeling in this 7:00 P.M. atmosphere lead to realization of the presence of Kṛṣṇa. Everything else is illusion, and ultimately that means perception of pain. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a blissful perception wherein so-called pain and pleasure are unimportant.

July 14

I just heard of a threat to one of the ISKCON properties in our

zone. It could involve long drawn-out legal battles, neighbors' petitions, anxieties. I think of Śrīla Prabhupāda and how he struggled for Bombay. There are Godbrothers and disciples who are prepared to defend Kṛṣṇa's temple and who accept the challenges as more service from the Lord. Therefore when I pray, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please let me return to work," I am asking to get back into the fight.

Worry—a chance to serve. *Trouble*—a way to love Him. *Stress*—a measure of Prabhupāda-consciousness. *Sleeping and eating*—limit them. *Speculation*—none.

I looked up "self-pity" in the dictionary and all it said was "pity of self." I thought there would be more, something deriding self-pity. I can look up some of the strong adjectives like maudlin, mawkish, or sentimental if I really want to get a feel of it. But I know already: self-pity is when you feel sorry for yourself and, generally speaking, it is an ignoble state of mind. For one thing, one's own state is never the *most* suffering. There are billions of suffering creatures in worse conditions. Beyond that, a person with transcendental vision doesn't lament for the living or the dead. So self-pity is an unnecessary state, although a human one.

In an ancient Chinese poem about old age, the poet concludes with the line, "I sigh with self-pity." We can identify with an occasional sigh of weakness. But we have to consider the real situation, that we are eternal parts and parcels of Kṛṣṇa, and our human pity should be directed toward all conditioned souls, *including our self*. But the pity should not be impotent, quietistic. "Armed with yoga, O Bhārata, stand and fight." In illness we may be prone to sighing, "Ah, poor me." We have to fight that tendency. That is the deeper meaning of being a good patient. "Why should I complain?" thought the great devotee Vāsudeva Vīpra, "I have leprosy as a reaction to my own misdeeds. Let me remember Lord Caitanya and be happy."

July 15

I spoke to a gathering of my disciples over the telephone. It was all impromptu. I was heading out my door to sit by the pond when I heard that Dāmodara dāsa was talking via a desk speaker with a gathering of my disciples in Potomac. I shared some news with them, and I tried to increase their determination.

“Is Janmāṣṭami dāsa there?” I asked. I complimented him for making big scores on *saṅkīrtana*.

“I’m trying,” he replied. And that expresses my own position also.

July 16

There is a slow improvement in my health. The summer is going by, and I hope I may get better. But there is no clear signal of that. Yet I am with my spiritual master, and he is with me, and now I am hearing his life’s story. Whatever health I have I should use for his service.

Lately, evenings near the cabin have been dominated by the cardinals’ songs. They are lively whistlers and twangers. Often we can spot them high in the trees and we can see one call to another. They are not as musically charming as the thrush, but it’s fun to see and hear them, especially after you’ve spent the day mostly indoors. They are also one of the loudest birds.

The devotees here are curious and amused that I have taken an interest in the birds at Gītā-nāgarī. Together we play the sport of finding new singers and noting when and where they appear. Tonight Keśīhantā was reminding me that Prabhupāda has written in a purport that a bird’s early morning singing is actually the forming of a question, “Where is food? Where is sex?” — the same questions that are being asked and answered by families and nations of the human species all over the world. As students of the *Bhāgavatam*, we try to link our bird-watching to Kṛṣṇa’s instructions and His *līlā*. But whereas in Kṛṣṇa-loka the boys are spontaneously aware of the relations between Kṛṣṇa and the birds, here we are slowly, somewhat awkwardly

trying to bring material and spiritual worlds together. We hope we will not fall into *māyā* and that Kṛṣṇa will approve—as we open our hearts to the everyday wonders of His universe.

July 17

Country Ratha-yātrā:
a sign in the temple hall,
“Just 10 days left.”

Some spring flowers are already dead. The May-apple leaves are yellow, and the plants have fallen to the ground. The garlic-mustards are also yellowing, although near the bottom of these plants new smaller blooms are appearing. They may even start a new cycle, a second crop of seeds before the season is over. New wildflowers bloom along Recuperation Way such as self-heal, a squarish flowerhead with purple flowerettes; also wild bergamont, tall flowers with green center-pads and many rays of honeysuckle-like petals. There are other, more obscure or “shy” flowers like enchanter’s nightshade, with almost microscopic-sized white flowers and fuzzy seedpods; and fringed loose-strife, a small five-petaled yellow flower; and woodsnettles, whose blooms are tiny green.

Many of the leaves have been damaged by insects. Earlier, it was the larvae of the gypsy moths, now it is the Japanese beetles. Each bug has its own chewing pattern on the leaves, but their eating is kept in check by the birds, toads, and frogs.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
filling in the dirt holes
where the cart will pass.

In a 1969 lecture at New Vrindaban, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.10) wherein Nārada Muni condemned all literature that does not describe the glories of the Lord. The Sanskrit phrase *vacaś citra-padam*, which Prabhupāda translates as “a jugglery of words”—decorative language void of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—is always rejected by the *paramahamsas*

or pure devotees. Speaking to the gathered devotees of New Vrindaban, Prabhupāda said, "Produce a page only, *Back to Godhead*! That will bring revolution to the human society about understanding spiritual life. Don't produce nonsense literature!"

Earlier in the talk Prabhupāda described all mundane literature as simply meant to waste time. Such arrangements of words, although decorative and made with metaphor and all literary skill, are in the judgement of the *Bhāgavatam* like the nasty places frequented by garbage-hunting crows.

"But if you produce a single literature," said Prabhupāda, "wherein simply there is glorification of God, anyone who will read he will derive from it immediately transcendental benefit. Produce a page only, *Back to Godhead*. Don't produce nonsense literature!"

With all respects and due admiration for the techniques and life-insights of the great haiku poets and all other "religious" or irreligious poets outside of pure devotional service, I see clearly how they all ultimately fail the test. As another great poet and philosopher, Śaṅkarācārya, said at the time of his death, "What good will all this word jugglery do you at the time of your death? Just worship Govinda. Just worship Govinda. Just worship Govinda."

I also study word-masters, appreciate their leanings toward goodness and God consciousness, and sometimes borrow their techniques, but I must also beware. Prabhupāda's admonition, "Don't produce nonsense literature!" still rings in my ears. Nārada Muni further confirms, "Pure transcendental literature, even though imperfectly composed, [is] heard, sung, and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest."

An advance copy of the latest issue of *Back to Godhead* just arrived. It is an exciting issue, with glamorous pictures of Māyāpur-dhāma, a personal story how a young man became a devotee, fine transcendental artwork—and some editing mistakes also. Just seeing and touching this spiritual magazine transforms my afternoon. I hope others will also appreciate the magazine and distribute it widely. Our zone's weekly newsletter,

Saṅkīrtana Yajña, also arrived today, including personal articles by devotees about their *saṅkīrtana* experiences. One devotee told how he went to the hospital with a swollen cheek and wound up giving an appreciative young doctor a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. These Kṛṣṇa conscious journals, filled with well-written (or even awkwardly-written) devotional statements, are the literatures that Prabhupāda refers to as *the only worthwhile writing and reading*, because loving service to Kṛṣṇa is at the center. “Even one page. . .”

July 18, 11:30 A.M.

Today I heard the first locusts of the season. Although they have just arrived, their sound is almost continual. I heard the first one when I was walking away from the temple after taking *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara. I went poking around in the temple’s backyard to see if any projects had been started for the Ratha-yātrā. Prabhānu was in the workshop making additions to the cart’s canopy. We discussed whether it is better to have the cart smaller and avoid the trouble with the one low wire that crosses the route, or to make the cart taller and more beautiful and then try to make provisions for a pole which can hold the electric line up as high as possible. I gave my opinion not to make the cart too short.

We then went to see Rādhā-Dāmodara, but He was just about to have His lunch. The *pūjārīs* had even placed His flute down on the altar and the trays of His foodstuff were set before Him. I saw Them for a few moments, and then the curtain lowered so They could take lunch undisturbed.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
rows of marigolds
waiting for the *yajña*.

July 19

I am just beginning to see light at the end of the long tunnel of my relapse. I felt so good this morning I thought, “My illness is finished—I’m completely well!” But that was only temporary.

Off and on I am in a dull, weak state, but sometimes it clears, like the Irish weather.

Going to see the Deities again. Devotees have said that I am being “handled roughly by His embrace.” But sitting before Rādhā-Dāmodara I had to smile at the presumptuousness of that idea. Throughout my so-called difficulties, He has been very, very light with me. I do not presume to charge Him with rough handling.

The cicadas are rattling. Throughout the farm it’s summer-quiet. Blue haze in the trees. The odor of fresh-cut hay. My illness gives me the opportunity to minutely observe the changes of season here at Gītā-nāgarī, but I wonder if I will ever get the opportunity to observe as closely the life of Vṛndāvana. In Vṛndāvana the changes in calendar are wed more closely to Vaiṣṇava activities. Yet Gītā-nāgarī is breaking new ground for Lord Caitanya’s movement. As an example of *varṇāśrama* community in the remote lands of the *mlecchās*, it is a spiritual miracle. And Kṛṣṇa has put me *here*, in a particular body: let me serve and praise Him.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
the cicadas have arrived,
“Only 8 days left.”

July 20

Country Ratha-yātrā:
His procession should be sunny —
not like today.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
preparing my lecture
while the ducks swim by.

This week President Reagan entered the hospital for a colon operation. A malignant tumor was successfully removed, but the doctors cannot ascertain whether he has malignant cancer in other parts of the body. If he does have malignant cancer, then

statistics say that 50% of people in his condition live only about five years more. If he has no other malignant growths, then there is a ninety percent chance that he will “survive,” despite this operation. In his case, everyone is calculating whether he can at least give three and a half more years active service as the President of the United States. After that, he won’t be so important. Life in devotional service is different. As long as a person is active and able, then his service is very important. We are not “in office” for four years. An active devotee is always valuable, and the world needs his preaching. As long as he is physically able, he should not retire.

In the past I may have failed to fully appreciate the serious task that Prabhupāda has given us. “Your task before you is very great,” he once wrote to me. I may have complained too much and now I wait (and pray). What do I ask for? — *That I can do what I was doing before.*

The Gītā-nāgarī gardeners and cooks are well-prepared. The zucchini is picked and waiting, tomatoes canned. String beans and cauliflower picked. Līlānanda is trying to make sour cream for the *sabjīs*. Home-grown apples, rhubarb, and strawberries — for chutney — are all picked. *Burfi* will be made as long as the milk holds out — so far about twelve hundred pieces in the freezer. More, more! Devotees are coming from Bolivia, Ireland, Vancouver, Trinidad, India — who says you can’t preach in the “country”?

Country Ratha-yātrā:
“Only 7 days left.”

This quiet creek
will become the Yamunā,
the cows will mingle
with Kṛṣṇa and Balarām
on Govardhana Hill,
and to join this *līlā*
all I have to do
is walk out my door.

July 21

SEEING THROUGH THE ŚĀSTRAS

The four repeating seasons of the year are an infinitesimal part of the eternal cycle of material life. All these changes occur within the portion of time known as material manifestation. But there will come a time when the earth is annihilated and then all the seasons will be disrupted. For hundreds of years there will be fire, and then for hundreds of years, rain, and then everything will be dissolved and put into a state of suspension. After many millions of years, there will again be creation, and the regular earthly seasons will recommence.

A human being, who endures for only a few earthly seasons, is usually covered in ignorance, like a smoke-covered flame, and he cannot understand life's purpose. He is under the influence of illusion, yet he thinks he is the doer. He tries to enjoy his senses and avoid suffering and sometimes he speculates as to where it all will end. Although we cannot understand the riddle of existence on our own, Lord Kṛṣṇa has given us the enlightened Vedas. *Tamasi mā jyotir gama*: come out of the darkness, come into the light. "Just chant the names of God and be free."

Human plan-makers, for all their advanced technology and bombastic politics, are hardly any more knowledgeable than snakes or squirrels. We are all entangled in the various limbs and branches of the banyan tree of material life. But the purifying power of *bhakti-yoga* is so great that the smallest act of service to Kṛṣṇa or His devotee can free us from the endless confinement. "Just offer Me a flower, a fruit, or water," asks Lord Kṛṣṇa, "offer it with devotion and I will accept it."

Just chant and pray: O energy of the Lord, O Lord, please engage me in Your service.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
"Only 6 days left."

Waiting for the Lord
to come down the dirt road,
to appear

against the sky,
to attract
His devotees,
in His fancy turban.

Waiting for the Lord
whose cart will scare the squirrels.
Waiting for the Lord
to smile on our farm.

I am sitting by the pond looking at a frog. He's almost the same color as the rocks and he's been sitting very still now for over five minutes. On the other side of the pond the rubrum lilies are blooming. There are at least half a dozen now at full bloom, pure white with generous powdery splashes of deep pink on their petals. Dāmodara dāsa wanted to pick them all at once, but I suggested he give one a day into the hand of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. As I write, I can hear Baladeva talking on the phone to Advaita Ācārya. They're discussing whether it is best for me to sleep more or less. My worst headaches are now under control, and the question is whether I should struggle to become active or use this little strength to allow the body to repair itself.

The pond has its own waterfall which drops down about two feet onto flat rocks and then drops another two feet into the pond. Prabhupāda commended the sound of gentle falling water as peaceful for the mind, and he used to have his own fountain-pond, especially in Vṛndāvana.

It's now going on fifteen minutes since I noticed the rock-colored frog sitting motionless. (According to Dāmodara dāsa, who found the frog in the grass and placed him here, he has actually been sitting in good frog-spirits, but motionless, for three hours!) *Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*. He's also a spirit soul, in an insignificant body. Maybe he was a Buddhist before, and now sits as good as nothing, like a rock, in "meditation." The difference between him and me is that I am chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The last rubrum lily

we'll give tomorrow
into the hand of Rādhā.

After being almost lighthearted in his predictions for months, Advaita Ācārya told Baladeva tonight that my condition may be chronic, incurable. According to medical statistics and my response to various medicines, I now fall into a minority percentage in regards to likely recovery. But the doctor admits, "It's all up to Kṛṣṇa." So my illness, which I had figured would last for about a year, may turn out to be a permanent accompaniment.

July 22

I have a desire to do my work, starting with chanting and hearing the holy name. I don't want to be caught as a laggard. When should a convalescent rest and when should he endeavor? The doctor advises me to restart my exercises, but to be careful not to work to the point of exhaustion. "But I cannot tell you what that point is," he says. "Only you can know it." At least the doctors and nurses are giving me some freedom. So let me step on the gas pedal, gently. Kṛṣṇa guides— "There is no possibility of one's becoming a *yogī*, O Arjuna, if one eats too much or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough" (Bg. 6.17).

Better not to think in medical terms how I will actually perform at the Ratha-yātrā in five days. It's also worrisome to think, "I may never get better. Will they take my duties away? How much time am I allowed for a comeback?"

I'm keeping a graph of my daily progress. This morning, with the graph line mounting upwards, I wrote on the chart, "So far, so good," but by noon I noted, "Lousy dip." In fact, everyone's physical chart is one long decline, starting with their birth.

The woodpecker is condemned to knock his head against the tree.

July 23

FOLLOWING THE PROCESS

Every day, for at least some time, I think of my friend who

gave up the *sannyāsa* vows for a different kind of life. I know my attitude toward this event in another person's life will change. At present I think of it as a challenge. The challenge is whether a person (a devotee) is free to do as he thinks best, or whether he must follow the strict order of the spiritual master and the dictation of the *śāstra*. As I remain in the *sannyāsa* order within the ISKCON institution, I see that my spiritual life is entirely dependent on my following *the process* of devotional service.

We follow this process in the faith that *śāstra* will guide us rightly, and that on our own we are full of mistakes and illusion. "Why is it not allowed to wear red and blue in the temple?" asked a guest of Prabhupāda in 1968. "Because it is red and blue," Prabhupāda replied. "Is that all right?" He then explained that there may be a reason why red clothing is not allowed in the temple, but that reason may not be known to us at present. Yet we have to follow the Vedic injunction.

Unless I follow the *paramparā* authority, my life or its record is just another bit of straw moving back and forth in the ocean of birth and death. It is the *bhakti-yoga* process, which according to Rūpa Gosvāmī is controlled and superintended by Kṛṣṇa's consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, which is the victory of any life dedicated to *bhakti*.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
 "Only 4 days to go—"
 Jaya Jagannātha!

As I walk into the quietest part of the farm, I see far overhead two white streaks from a silver jet. Close overhead I see and hear a dark brown helicopter—an unusual intrusion. Yet many alarming things are always happening, whether I can notice them or not. Sometimes we think of our situation as peaceful, just because we see only a part of it—the dragonflies like blue darning needles flying in the hot summer sun. But if at any moment we could consider the total picture of material reality, we would see danger, with all life racing to annihilation. To proceed slowly and steadily with the affairs of devotional service is the only sane activity. Even if our work is arrested at the next moment, nothing goes in vain.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
 widening His roadway —
 the sound of the scythe.

It's very cold this morning for this time of the year—barely fifty degrees. I walked early in the morning before the sun was even up, listening to a lecture by Prabhupāda. Although I can't keep complete attention, Prabhupāda's words will nourish me. More and more I want to hear and feel the strengthening of my spiritual master's message—the śāstric authority.

Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned Cārvāka Muni, who claimed there is no next life and so we can behave any way we like in this life for the purpose of sense gratification. Prabhupāda gave some logical arguments to show that there is a next life, but he finally asserted the proof of *śabda-brahma*, the authority of the scriptures, the authority of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is what my spiritual master lived by (unlike the speculators), and this is what I want to hear.

In the garden a monarch butterfly and a large bumblebee go up and down the rows of bright orange marigolds, stopping to sip honey. I am out here too, trying to think of Kṛṣṇa. The butterfly is a specimen of Kṛṣṇa's beauty which even a dullard can appreciate.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
 our city guests will be surprised
 by the monarch butterflies.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
 "Only 3 days left;"
 I'll wear my red cap.

July 25

Festival meditation: prepare in advance to avoid looking at women or eating too many sweets during the festival. The Vaiṣṇava ascetic Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābāji, used to scorn this kind of festival-attending by so-called devotees.

Inattention While Chanting

During my *japa* I regularly think of things apart from direct service to the holy name. I have also heard Godbrothers excuse us busy preachers for inattention at our *mantras*. After all, they say, we are usually thinking of some kind of service to Kṛṣṇa, and the preaching demands are so great that our brains run on into various service particulars, even when we are supposed to be concentrating on the sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*—so it is excusable.

“Maybe in my next life,” one Godbrother said, “I will be born as a simple villager in the countryside of Bengal, and I can simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in ecstasy.” Taxed to the limit, we manage men (and women) and money, and there aren’t enough hours in the day to achieve our project goals. Nor is there a moment’s let-up from the opposition. But I think these excuses for inattentive chanting are, after all, excuses.

I should have trained myself up better, so that the chanting was never neglected. As it is now, it seems I will lament throughout my life about inattentive chanting. But even this reminder today shows me there’s still hope. Better to be embarrassed and admit that I am a poor chanter than to excuse myself and ask Kṛṣṇa’s dispensation. My most recent excuse is that I don’t have the energy to chant attentively, due to ill health. If that’s true, then at least I must deliberately try to return to better chanting, when Kṛṣṇa gives me stronger health.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
wind and rain break flowers
but the tents are up.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
along His roadway
a cardinal sits on a fence.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
after the storm
deadwood branches block the path.

July 26

It rained all night, knocking out the electricity. Now we are worried whether it will be wet and gloomy tomorrow. In the rain, a great blue heron stalks through the shallow creek. Three feet tall, he stretches his neck and looks down through the water for a glimpse of a fish. He is called “blue” heron, but he appears gray as he steps forward warily, like death personified for the fish and frogs. His appearance is like an ominous symbol of the bad weather, which must change by tomorrow if Jagannātha’s procession is to be as we would want it—a sunny ride.

A few days ago I was pleased to realize that the real subject of this book is not my insignificant self, but the process of *bhakti*. I noted that the process of *bhakti* is guided by the personality of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. But this also made me feel uneasy, as if I was now claiming a direct relationship with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Therefore, a further conclusion to this line of thought is that the process of *bhakti* is guided by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s representative, my spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. The diary of one of his servants is more occasion for Śrīla Prabhupāda *kathā*. ✓

While walking I got startled by a large black snake. Now I have stepped back and I’m watching him from a comfortable position as he slowly winds near the base of a tree, his tongue flicking in and out. If my *guru* said, “It’s not a snake, it’s a stick, pick it up,” would I have the faith and courage? Nearby the snake I see many snake-like dead branches, but on closer inspection, there is no mistaking them. Yet sometimes our spiritual master’s order is in defiance of such common sense inspection. To pass such hard tests we must be certain of our *guru*’s authority, certain how he wants us to act in a specific instance—and we must have the faith and courage. “One has to pass the test of the spiritual master.”

Country Ratha-yātrā:

“Only 1 day left—”

as sun goes in and out.

The raindrops are like friends. They make a pounding sound on the roof, they appear in little splashes, and cause the creek to flow quickly. Again and again I see the same things, like the rain; but I am not tired of them, I welcome them. Even in the spiritual world, the same things happen, but one sees them with deepening joy. There is Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda, and there He is again. Here is the Gītā-nāgarī rain again, and we are indoors in downpour chanting the holy names. "These boys," said Prabhupāda, "can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours and they'll not get tired. But if you say, 'rose flower' for just ten minutes, you'll get disgusted."

But it is pouring so hard now that even if the sun comes out tomorrow, the parade way will be muddy. Within minutes the green lizard tails are covered as the entire creek grows and flows in sheets of heavy rain.

I would like to go out on this last evening before Ratha-yātrā and see what the devotees are doing, but I don't have the head-strength. I'm supposed to save my strength for tomorrow. But I would really like to go. I'll be satisfied, however, if I can understand that it's Kṛṣṇa who is keeping me from going out.

Also, Kṛṣṇa is right here. My small-sized deities of Jagannātha will ride on the same cart as the large Jagannātha of New Nīlācala, and so devotees here have made sets of clothes for Them. The clothes arrived tonight and we tried them on the Lord. They are a royal purple color, and Subhadrā's veil has a white lace backing. Lord Jagannātha's turban is too small, however, so it is being fixed. At least this part of the festival preparation is taking place at my cabin.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
the Lord tries on
His purple gown
a last adjustment—
His royal crown.

July 27

RATHA-YĀTRĀ DAY

A doctor called to say that I shouldn't hold the initiation today. But there's no question of not holding it. I just hope I do it well on behalf of Prabhupāda. No false heroics, just duty. Unless the movement expands, what is the purpose of being a *guru*? I want to show that even if I am a long-term invalid, my most basic duties can go on. Many duties are going on by delegation, but initiation cannot be delegated. Anyway, I myself am also a tiny delegate of Śrīla Prabhupāda, so *he is the guru* who is actually presiding in my heart, and who is therefore the *guru* sanctioning and enabling me to perform today's function. Even if I were healthy, the initiation would be a big farce except that Prabhupāda, the genuine *guru* of the whole world, has given me authority to represent him.

As predicted, the rains dwindled off during the night, and many stars appeared in the clearing sky. Now it is a cool summer morning, and it appears that the sun will bless the farm on this festival day.

Country Ratha-yātrā:
a thrush announces it,
and cardinals too.

On the occasion of Lord Jagannātha's *darśana* the most prominent wildflowers blooming are the white daisies, the black-eyed Susans, and milkweed. They get the opportunity to see the Lord, as do the various creepers and the freshly-bathed trees. There is a saying, "See Naples and die," but here we say, "See Lord Jagannātha and then die." Even a single worshipful *darśana* of the Supreme Lord can grant one liberation from the cycle of birth and death. If one doubts this power, *The Nectar of Devotion* assures us, "It is not true for everyone, but for some it is true."

Noon:

My reportage will be anti-climactic. After verses and paragraphs

of anticipation of Country Ratha-yātrā, now what do I have to say? So many images at once! Perhaps this will be more what it's like when I get well again, that things happen so fast I cannot report them in detail. There's too much to capture unless one meticulously becomes the news reporter of the day's events. I cannot be a news reporter because all my attention is geared to functioning, getting through it successfully, serving. And I've been successful so far.

I gave out fifteen names and fifteen *brāhmaṇa* threads and performed a marriage and did my duty, and it went right. The sun was out, Gour Hari was there making humorous remarks, the ladies and their children, the ladies and their men, the *brahmacāris*, Mahānidhi Swami performing the fire sacrifice, and now the parade.

I didn't fall apart. Sat for two hours. Only some pain in the eye.

Mr. Hoover, our neighbor across the river, decides today — of all days — to cut down creekside trees with his power saw. This places him strategically in view of the Ratha-yātrā. While we are waiting for the cart to come down, suddenly there's a loud crash as Mr. Hoover saws a tree which tumbles into the river. Exactly what is he doing? No one seems to know. Anyway, the *kīrtana* will drown him out.

Now I can hear Jagannātha's *kīrtana* starting down the dirt road. I, who have been a recluse for months, now see familiar faces of devotees wherever I turn. Look out squirrels! And look out Mr. Hoover!

5:30 P.M.

It was a long procession, but it was wonderful. I was able to squirt the devotees with water from fire extinguishers as I rode in an ox-drawn sled between Prabhupāda's cart, which led the procession, and Lord Jagannātha's. Hour after hour, we chanted, walked in the sunshine, and I exchanged with the devotees by spraying them with water and sometimes throwing cookies to them. At one point near the end, one of the oxen pulling my sled became too exhausted to go on. He was breathing so

heavily his sides were heaving in and out. At Vaiṣṇava dāsa's suggestion I squirted him with water from the extinguisher. Wetting him up and down, including his legs and feet, he seemed to revive by the cooling. Then we proceeded for the last mile. Now the large feast is beginning, but my own participation is over and I am back in the cabin.

I just heard that Prabhānu Prabhu, while using a power saw to make a small altar for my Lord Jagannātha, cut his hand badly. He was rushed to the hospital just as the parade began. One finger was severed. Blood and wounds and bodily pains are also a part of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But so also is the celebrative procession, the exchanges of love, and the opulent feasting. The body is doomed, but by devotional service, we are purified and liberated, whether we are rushing to the hospital or dancing with Lord Jagannātha, or confined to a long, slow recovery.

Night time:

There are hundreds of devotees here now. My day was completely different than usual with intense exchanges with the devotees from the oxen sled, but now I'm back to my old routine, even while devotees and guests roam Gītā-nāgarī. Many are wandering through the woods as I often do. I can see a saffron-dressed *brahmacārī* sitting by the creekside. Most devotees here are from the cities, and some of them are meandering away from the main festival area, looking for peaceful moments alone. They have quickly found the Gītā-nāgarī charm.

In terms of medicine, today was a large intake of love.

10 P.M.

Hard to sleep. Talking and thinking over the events. "Did you see them lift up Nāma-saṅkīrtana dāsa during the dancing and pass him around like a beach ball?" "Did you see those New York devotees, lined up twelve abreast with their arms around one another's shoulders dancing through the fields?" "How come Sahadeva was wearing a moustache?" "Did the guests like the feast?" "How is Prabhānu?"

Late at night a city guest blows his wooden recorder and

walks along the creekside. Many have brought their own tents. The bewildered farm dogs bark; they don't know the value of this preaching.

July 28

Almost all the guests stayed overnight and through the morning program today. Yesterday a thousand plates of *prasādam* were served. I met privately with devotees from Trinidad and from Boston. At two o'clock today, the buses left.

July 29

ANTICLIMAX

The Gītā-nāgarī community is working for another festival, an Open House, especially for the local people. The New York devotees have returned to the city to get ready for their own Ratha-yātrā down Fifth Avenue. And the *saṅkīrtana* devotees are returning to their various preaching spots and traveling routes. The prospects are somewhat anti-climactic for me as I return to my convalescent activities in and around the cabin, chanting, hearing, seeing the mist rise from the early morning creek, and trying to get better.

Looking ahead to August, there are already some scheduled visits, but basically, it will be slow work. I should not expect dramatic increases in my activities, such as many meetings, long phone calls, or travel. Therefore, I should concentrate on the basics of hearing and chanting, and I should be satisfied with my surroundings.

2

August 1

Full moon night. I wake and hear for the first time this year a full chorus of evening crickets. Is this the first night they've started, or have I just noticed it now?

A few weeks ago, I wrote a letter to Nick Virgilio, an American haiku poet. I included in my letter examples of some of my own short poems, and I asked him whether he thought haiku poetry could convey a religious message. Nick Virgilio responded to my letter and poems. He sent a "religious" poem of his own (each time he uses the word religion, he does so within quotation marks) and he suggested that God consciousness should be expressed in such a way that a person of any religious sect could receive the "religious" inspiration. I am preparing another letter to send to him, with more poems. In my letter I included a quote by Śaṅkarācārya, "What good will word jugglery do you at the time of your death? Just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda." I have advocated both in my letters and in the poems a more explicit praise of God beyond the Buddhistic "God in all things." So today, even before my letter has been sent off, another note has come from Mr. Virgilio:

Dear Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami,

Please study the verse below. It may answer some of your questions about how to handle "religion" in haiku. This verse came to me *after* I read your letter. Let me know your thoughts on this matter.

Nick's verse:

deaf-mute ministers
praising the name of God:
white chrysanthemums

I am happy to see him mention "the name of God." I also appreciate the "religion" of his poem, which subtly reveals that all

things, including the white chrysanthemums, are in their own way glorifying God. My hope is that poetry (even what is considered the best poetry) can go beyond the “deaf-mute ministers” to live, speaking poets glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead in honest, explicit love. Only through love for Him can we truly understand and love “all things.” As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Ninth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

By Me, in My unmanifested form, the entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them.

And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence! Although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, I am not part of this cosmic manifestation, for My Self is the very source of creation.

—Bg. 9.4–5

This confidential knowledge of the Supreme Person is only available through *bhakti*. Mr. Virgilio seems to say that the best we can do is feel and express the keen immediacy of God’s presence in this world. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes beyond this. By hearing the transcendental messages of *śāstra* from the realized spiritual master, a person can experience the immediacy of the Supreme Person in His spiritual abode as well as His presence through His energies in the material world. This is the *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* philosophy (simultaneous and inconceivable oneness and difference) as enunciated by Lord Caitanya.

Since the spiritual world of Kṛṣṇa and His associates is the major part of existence and is infinitely more blissful than the material world of birth and death, it is ignorance to remain in the condemned portion and to try to see God here without assistance from higher sources. The beginning transcendentalist feels inspired while tasting water, and realizes “the water is also God.” But the devotee, while realizing the “God-ness” of water, thanks the Supreme Person for supplying the water, and renders Him service.

When devotees once pointed out a beautiful morning sunrise to Śrīla Prabhupāda in upstate New York, Prabhupāda advised

them, “We are not interested just in the scenery. We are interested in the Person who has created the scenery.” So by submissive hearing and chanting of His holy name and pastimes, anyone can experience the immediacy of the spiritual Person. Only when we express this realization—God consciousness—do we make worthwhile speech, poems, and literature.

I visited Prabhānu, his bandaged right hand in a sling. He recounted the accident and how he resisted shock. He told me the practical steps he had to take to stop his bleeding. He had to remember where there were clean rags in the shop, but at first he could not remember. But by concentrating, he recalled and stopped his bleeding. Then he went outside and found a devotee and asked to be taken to the hospital. By the time they were in the car, with a Prabhupāda *bhajana* tape playing, Prabhānu felt free of shock and began saying how grateful he was to be in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, “to know that Kṛṣṇa is God, to be a devotee.”

I read to him from the recent letter I received from Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami. TKG was encouraging me in my own illness, and made several points: 1) He said that Kṛṣṇa was preparing me by giving me an experience like the pain of death. 2) By this physical ordeal, I could finally become free of the desire for sense gratification, to whatever degree it subtly lingers. 3) Through austerities of the illness, Kṛṣṇa is preparing me to do some higher work.

I told Prabhānu we could take these as goals. He then related to me his usual keen enthusiasm for reading Prabhupāda’s books, and said he is now reading a chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* every day. So he has lost a finger, but he appeared quite fixed to me.

Kṛṣṇa and the Holy Dhāma

I had a brief meeting with some of the devotees who regularly collect funds for Gītā-nāgarī. One of them asked me how she could realize better her ultimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa. “Usually I think in terms of Gītā-nāgarī-*dhāma*, but what about my

relationship with Kṛṣṇa?" I replied that Kṛṣṇa is absolute, so if one touches or appreciates Kṛṣṇa's abode, that is as good as touching Kṛṣṇa personally. Moreover, as a servant of the *dhāma*, one serves the Deities, Rādhā-Dāmodara. So the relationship is complete within the *dhāma* and service to the Deities. In my own case I count very much on the *dhāma* and its natural activities.

Recent Events in the Dhāma

The groundhog just came out between two pine trees. He very cautiously looks around before venturing into open space. He moves a few feet, stops to sense whether there's any danger, then walks on. His face and tail seem to have mended from his injuries of last spring. Becoming confident, he waddles down the main pathway.

We have been speculating why the squirrel population in the nearby oak tree recently diminished. Dāmodara dāsa contacted a squirrel expert at State College who said that the squirrels regularly move their domiciles within an area of several acres which they consider to be their homeland. So they've moved down the street, but a few gray-browns remain and follow their regular patterns of tree acrobatics from branch to branch around the cabin.

A more recent appearance is that of the wasps who are building a large gray ball in the branches of the pine tree. At first it looked like a ball hanging from a Christmas tree branch. Now it is as big as a grapefruit with many wasp-workers crawling on it, carrying out their assigned tasks.

There are so many mosquitoes now that walking in the afternoon becomes difficult. It's easier to fight the winter cold by wearing heavy clothes than it is to walk against the face-attacking gnats and mosquitoes.

Aside from my convalescent-recluse point of view, the main activities of Gītā-nāgarī are cow protection, agriculture, and Deity worship. The cows are eating fresh hay, and the oxen are in the pastures. I have heard Bhūmi is due to deliver a new calf in two days. Vaiṣṇava dāsa is training two new oxen. On eighty acres,

the shiny green cornstalks are now eight feet tall. The vegetable garden is ripe with half a dozen varieties of squash, half a dozen types of melons, beans, tomatoes, carrots, and more.

The worship of Lord Dāmodara also reflects the time of the year. In addition to fanning Their Lordships with peacock fans, the *pūjārīs* now run an electric fan. Dāmodara and Kālachandajī (small, black Kṛṣṇa) regularly wear no shirts, and the *pūjārīs* apply *candana* with camphor to Their foreheads. There are plenty of flowers for garlands, and the seamstresses are planning new clothes for Janmāṣṭamī.

August 2

Both illness and indulgence have lowered my standards of devotion in chanting and reading. By physical debilitation I was forced to slide into silent *mantras*, but I think I can get out of it now if I try. I have allowed the habit of inattention in chanting to go wild. Back to the basics.

Reposing on the desk
they invite me once again:
my red *japa* beads.*

August 3

Advaita Ācārya came to examine me. I showed him my daily charts and gave my positive and negative viewpoints. He said I am now ten to fifteen percent improved from *status migrainus*, which he calls an emergency state. It was sobering to hear. While speaking with him, I looked at a painting of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhārāṇī. I was thinking, a devotee doesn't want to ask anything from Kṛṣṇa, nor does he use Kṛṣṇa. He simply wants to serve Him. So I continue my medical treatments with faith that everything is happening because of Kṛṣṇa.

I said I wouldn't chant any silent *japa*, but today I had to do it again. It wasn't indulgence but it was all I could do. The hours

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were passing and I couldn't keep waiting for a clear stage to chant out loud.

Jagannātha's in bed,
end of another day;
hope I'll dream
of serving Him.

Jagannātha's in bed,
late cardinals sing.
I'll work in the morning,
now rest detached.

August 4

Kuṇḍali in Philadelphia is getting pains under his ribcage and has undergone a series of tests, but the doctors can't reveal the source of the malady. "There can be little doubt," Kuṇḍali wrote me in a letter, "that these material bodies are a great inconvenience if a person hankers for uninterrupted devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Our bodily ailments simply underscore the need for us to be determined not to return to this world of bad bargains." Who is exempt?

5:00 P.M.

On a woods walk talking to myself. The retired cows stare back at me. One pushes its face against a bush in an attempt to brush off flies. The cows also twitch their ears and whisk their tails to chase away the tenacious flies. I can't see the blue jay who cries hidden in the upper leaves. Out of sorts, I tell myself, quiet down, tolerate, try to see everything as Kṛṣṇa's will. Why don't you chant?

August 5

A letter from Śrīla Harikeśa Swami:

I have not heard from you in a long time and was wondering how you were. Is your health getting better now that you're being treated by your own personal doctor? I have been worried thinking you

didn't want to write because my last letter was obnoxious. If it is so, please forgive me. I was trying to play Sigmund Freud and somehow be of help in that way

I replied by telegram: "Please accept my obeisances. All glories to Prabhupāda. I sent a letter in early July. I think my message is now outdated. I'll send a new letter. Health is still bad. But spirits good. Thank you for your concern. Your servant."

Our previous letter exchange was from the psychological angle, whether I had become ill from a self-inflicted inner conflict. But things seem simpler now. I'm sick; I want to get better. I'm sick; and Kṛṣṇa is in charge. And the real "me" is not sick.

I started hearing the *Śrī Nāmāmṛta*. Kṛṣṇa is identical with His name, and so we should chant with reverence (and attention). One who takes the name of Kṛṣṇa as material falls down. When one is advanced in chanting he realizes that the name is Kṛṣṇa and is spiritual.

My friend, why have you so neglected this *mahā-mantra*? Are you going to improve and take it up before it's too late? *This* is what counts, more than what others think of me or my "position." Good chanting will also enable me to manage affairs and to be detached.

Daily *japa*: A hope of reform, but what are you after? — noon-day ecstasies? *Bhāva* symptoms in the body? I just want to achieve the knowledge that this is important. *That* conviction is lacking now.

Controlling the mind is similar to Paramānanda's farm articles on how to train an ox: be firm and patient, let him know who is boss. But if you beat him too much, he won't work at all. Yoke your ox, whip in hand.

Śeṣa and his wife, who have been driving to visit different temples, stopped at Gītā-nāgarī. After we talked for awhile, Śeṣa asked whether I had considered "the future." He meant whether I had considered giving up some of my responsibilities.

I said I had never really thought seriously about it and that such a retirement plan is premature. I made it clear that I have no intention of giving up responsibilities. But he made me face the problem of how I would continue to manage things if there is no improvement in my health. Śeṣa is certainly one of my best well-wishers in this world, and therefore he spoke this without any ill motive. But his suggestion that I might become “a writer” without other responsibilities was the last thing I wanted to hear. I am still working on the plan we began this year—taking one year to recuperate.

While we talked I thought again of the example of Kṛṣṇa’s son, Pradyumna, who was knocked unconscious on the battlefield and had to temporarily retreat. Of course, if I cannot maintain my responsibilities, then I should not artificially try to keep a position. But I am not in a retiring mood, nor do I think Śrīla Prabhupāda would want me to give up the duties he assigned me. It was a challenge for me to hear this; now let me see if I can channel it in a way to aid my physical recovery. The prospect of remaining an invalid and keeping all responsibilities appears contradictory, but retirement propositions are undesirable.

Let me see what Kṛṣṇa desires. I am running behind schedule in the year of recovery. I have not recovered at all, although we are passed the mid-year point. But there are still a few good months to go.

Dear Lord, don’t count me out.
 Please count me in.
 I want my share of troubles.
 I’m talking big, but it’s up to You.
 I’m just Your firefly,
 I’m just Your brown duck trying to swim,
 I’m just a drop of water in the stream.
 But as a leader in ISKCON,
 appointed by Your servant, I ask:
 Don’t drop me prematurely.

August 6

It will be a quiet day for me while our zonal leaders meet in

Washington. I have given my input on all their agenda items, but I cannot attend. There will also be a national meeting of ISKCON leaders later in this month. And at the end of the month, in New Vrindaban, a meeting to discuss *varṇāśrama* society.

I think again of Śeṣa's phrase last night, "What about the future?" In one sense, he caught me unaware. How can I speak of the future? But this remark has given me new impetus. They should not expect miracles. Nor should anyone attempt to bury me.

Śivarāma Swami wrote me: "I asked Śrīla Rāmeśvara Swami about your health and he said, 'As bad as ever.'"

Memos

My editors delete
my passing doubts:
"You'll simply raise
your readers' doubts in you."

Then what is the benefit
of my struggling
unless I succeed?

And what is the benefit
of my criticizing the birds and trees?
From God's view
are they not all spiritual?
And as His servant's servant
shouldn't I see as He?

After the meeting with Śeṣa yesterday in which my return to duty was seriously discussed, I thought of my attempt, which is barely beginning, to reform *japa*. "Idealistic," I thought, "another quixotic rush." The challenge to return to my full responsibilities seemed more important, and my chanting hopes seemed to be just an invalid's hobby. What would I really achieve even after months—some mechanical increase?

But repeated hearing of *Nāmāmṛta* passages turns me in the

right direction. "Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is spiritual, chanting never becomes hackneyed or tiresome." As I hear, my self-doubts arise within like symptoms of illness. I can only hear the reading attentively for about fifteen minutes at a time, but it is medicine: *bhavauṣadhāc choṭra-mano-bhirāmāt*.

Even if you are ill and weak, can't you at least *whisper* the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*?

The rain shower of the afternoon has ended, leaving a pleasant atmosphere. I'm going outside to pick that one white rose I've had my eye on for days. It should be just about to bloom and Dāmodara dāsa has so far kept the bugs off it.

August 7, 6:00 A.M.

While walking, I'm hearing Prabhupāda's lectures from the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, 1969. He's praising *bhakti-yoga* above all other *yogas*. He points out that his devotees in Los Angeles are always meditating on Kṛṣṇa because they are serving Him. The boys who are digging in the earth are thinking, "We'll plant roses to offer to Kṛṣṇa." So even while digging they are meditating. And those who are cooking are also meditating, what to speak of those who are chanting and dancing? Encouraging to hear! We have to earnestly try to serve Kṛṣṇa under the order of the *guru*, and then *whatever* we do, that's also Kṛṣṇa meditation, or *yoga*. My walking is also Kṛṣṇa meditation as I measure out my strength and try to increase, and even as I am forced to decrease, the meditation is always, "How can I return to full service to Kṛṣṇa?" So while forced to be inactive, any honest meditation of how to return to full service is *full* meditation. Just thinking about the service is as good as doing it. Even while fighting disease or accepting illness in its inevitable features, a devotee can serve Kṛṣṇa. In all cases Kṛṣṇa is testing us by our desire to serve Him.

In Prabhupāda's books, there are different statements about a pure devotee's attitude toward prayer when in illness. We will find individual cases, but I think the main *siddhānta* is that a

devotee does not pray to Kṛṣṇa for relief from material distress, including bodily ailments.

One exception comes to mind: the elephant-devotee Gajendra. Prabhupāda describes that when the elephant was caught in the jaws of the crocodile, he prayed out of helplessness to the Supreme Lord. He prayed both for immediate relief from his pain, and beyond that he prayed for relief from the painful cycle of birth and death. Prabhupāda explains that a devotee should not actually ask anything of Kṛṣṇa, but sometimes in helplessness, having no one else to turn to, he turns to his dearest friend and cries for help.

Another example is Śrīla Prabhupāda allowing his disciples to pray for his health during the last months of 1977. Prabhupāda gave us a prayer, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You desire, please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda." During that time, Rūpānuga Prabhu also wrote a prayer addressed to all the higher authorities in *paramparā*, asking that they please let Śrīla Prabhupāda stay with us a little longer in this world. But the fact is, Śrīla Prabhu-pāda went back to Godhead despite our prayers that he remain in this world. The higher powers had their own will in the matter, and we had to accept it. If a devotee prays to Kṛṣṇa for something and he is denied it, then he should accept that as Kṛṣṇa's free will. Prabhupāda gave the example of the wives of German soldiers who became atheists when their prayers for their husbands' safety went unfulfilled.

It appears, therefore, that a devotee should not pray for his recovery from material disease. He should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and ask to be engaged in the Lord's service, as the Lord desires. A devotee should not make a condition upon his service, claiming, "I will serve You if You stop this suffering." And even in the case where a devotee becomes so desperate and helpless that he cries out to the Lord for material amelioration, even then he should not be disappointed if Kṛṣṇa brings no material relief. He should understand that his suffering is part of Kṛṣṇa's plan for the devotee's ultimate purification.

Although these points are clear, I may study it further in Prabhupāda's books. Because sometimes there seems to be a

fine line between trying to get well and accepting illness as one's lot. We call in a doctor, we try to improve our diet, and we try to exercise. Why? Because we want to return to full active service for our spiritual master. And yet we do not throw our full prayer of supplication to Kṛṣṇa that He give us bodily health. As with other aspects of devotional service, dealing with illness requires intelligent balance.

MEDITATION

From where I sit I can see Kṛṣṇa dressed in yellow, dancing and playing His flute. Balarāma is to Kṛṣṇa's right, also dancing, and two cowherd boys surround Them. I can also see a photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda with myself beside him, assisting him in the *abhiṣekha* bathing of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in Boston. Prabhupāda is showing me how to mix the yogurt, milk, and ghee (clarified butter), and how to pour the liquids over Rādhā-Gopīvallabha.

I can also see Prabhupāda's books on the bookshelves, all volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and other books. There are many other items in the room such as the rocking chair, the electric fan, the rugs, and the bed and so on. This body I am in is also an outer object which I perceive, a flesh-and-blood casing. Just as I am within the room of this cabin, with its pine wood paneling, so I am within this human body. I also perceive that it hurts to be within this body, and it is only by the higher knowledge of *śāstra* that I can comprehend *why*.

When Sanātana Gosvāmī placed himself humbly as a disciple before Lord Caitanya, he admitted that he could not understand the meaning of life. He specifically asked, "Who am I?" and also, "Why am I in pain from different sources of misery?" Lord Caitanya explained everything to Sanātana, beginning with the description of the real self. When one comes to higher knowledge, then the painful situation no longer bewilders. I understand I am originally free of material pain or illusory happiness. My present perception of pain is due to identification with this body.

Holding to these higher truths, I pass the hours of a summer afternoon aware of my true spiritual nature.

I've been given a small handbook on insects. I opened at random to a page describing the Cicada Killer. One color photo shows the killer (a species of wasp) on top of a cicada, and the other shows the killer dragging the cicada underground. The text:

This large solitary wasp digs a burrow a foot or so deep. Inside passages the female stores adult cicadas which she has paralyzed by stinging. The heavy cicadas are dragged up a tree by the killer till she can get enough altitude to fly back to her burrow. When the egg hatches, the larva feeds on the helpless cicada.

In other words, the cicadas are eaten alive by this predator's offspring. On the page facing the Cicada Killer is the Velvet Ant and a similar horrible story: "The female crawls down the burrow of a wasp and kills the owner with a powerful sting." Both the illustrations in the text remind me of punishments on hellish planets as described in the Fifth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that if one doubts the existence of hellish planets, it can be corroborated by our own eyes that such existence goes on even on this earthly planet. This is certainly true of the insect world. Yesterday I saw a dragonfly pin down a flailing butterfly by gripping its head with its strong jaws.

The insect book, written especially for children, also describes how one can start one's own insect collection, and there are pictures of "killing bottles" in which the hobbyist can capture and kill insects without crushing them. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also informs us about this kind of activity. The *karma* for piercing the bodies of insects is that one may himself be pierced by a lance, even while in the human body. *Jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*: one living being is food for another. And thus the whole material world is teeming with tortures and miseries. But when we preach that people should use human life to get free of these miseries,

skeptics sometimes call us “world-negating,” and fools even question, “What miseries?”

The reason I got the insect book was to find out more about the hornets, since their big nest is only a few feet from my window. My fears have not been allayed by learning more about them. At times the nest can accommodate over ten thousand hornets. The colony is supposed to stay active until the end of summer, at which time all the workers die off. Everything revolves around the queen wasp. There are often wars with other colonies and queens. But after the night’s rainstorm, the bottom of the wasp nest has come unwound, and I cannot see even a single wasp moving about. Anyway, as long as they don’t make war on me, I won’t war on them.

I often wonder about the spurts of happiness I feel during the day, even during a high-pain day. Desires to write, inspirations to chant, appreciations of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa—it may be any of these things, and they come like waves out of the ocean. I think if they did not continue to come, I could not live. Every devotee must experience such waves in the ocean of devotional service.

I’m listening to *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, the third volume, which tells of Prabhupāda’s stroke. The disciples sat and discussed the meaning of their spiritual master’s illness.

One thing I heard on a tape this morning by Prabhupāda I particularly appreciated. He was explaining that a devotee never says in a very definite way how he will carry out plans on specific dates. He said that he had personal experience of this from the words of his Guru Mahārāja, his spiritual master. Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would never say that he would definitely do anything, but would always place the condition on it, “If Kṛṣṇa desires.” This was very appealing to hear.

So my day’s work mostly consisted of quietly enduring indoors. At the end of the day, I went outside and met Gour Hari. He told me more about the success of the open house here and how the guests were intimately received. We also spoke about

New Vrindaban. There have been some territorial disagreements about the preaching of New Vrindaban men in this area. But now we are trying to settle it. Lately I have been gaining more appreciation how New Vrindaban is a very special place, like a Mâyāpur or Vṛndāvana of America. I hope we can settle our differences (which naturally arise) by appeal to the higher principle of cooperation. Personally I am eager to mend any rift so that I can express my full appreciation for New Vrindaban.

Today I also heard the latest essay by Śubhānanda, explaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the scholars, and I wrote him a letter of appreciation.

I write these thoughts in the day's last light, hoping for a good night, and a better tomorrow, if Kṛṣṇa desires.

When visitors arrive unannounced I'm like a jumpy deer. It's best that I don't have strenuous meetings right now. Very slowly I seem to be repairing, but Advaita Ācārya is afraid that any single event might put me into another slide.

Today D. Mahārāja arrived on his way to a big ISKCON meeting at New Vrindaban. He is discontent about his situation and talked with Baladeva about it. Godbrothers are sometimes not satisfied with the cooperation of their Godbrothers. I will not be taking part directly in this New Vrindaban meeting, although the waves of controversy are reaching me even in my isolated cabin.

8:30 P.M.

By Kṛṣṇa's grace, Volume 4 of *Prabhupāda Nectar* arrived from the printer. I attended the 8:00 P.M. *ārati* at the temple to offer the book to Rādhā-Dāmodara. Their Lordships were wearing white and red evening clothes. Sureśvara dāsa was offering the articles of *ārati*, and when I noticed that the *ārati* was a full one, I became restless. I thought, "It will take so long." But half-way through the *kīrtana* I became carried up in the transcendental feelings. About fifteen devotees were gathered and we sang together, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The little red

book, *Prabhupāda Nectar 4*, stood beside the Śrīla Prabhupāda mūrti on the altar, and the other *Prabhupāda Nectar* was at the foot of Lord Dāmodara.

In the temple before the Deities, in congregational *kīrtana*, one does not have to make any bridges or special connections to the spiritual world, as I sometimes have to do in my cabin. In the temple everything is completely spiritual to see and hear and smell and touch. When the mind wanders, it is not difficult to return to the golden form of Rādhārāṇī, to the sweet faces of Lalitā and Viśākhā, to the seated, bare-armed form of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and to the presence of the gathered Vaiṣṇavas. And I am also aware of the protective, sensitive presence of Paramānanda Prabhu.

It was nevertheless a bit of an ordeal for me to endure the whole *ārati*. I felt the embarrassment which an invalid feels in his condition, and a desire to explain myself. But what is there to say?

My body is a frail egg. But despite it, it was very pleasurable to be back with the devotees again. After *ārati*, there was a split second of silence and I realized I was supposed to chant the “Jaya Om” prayers. Of course I remembered them; one never forgets.

Now back at the cabin. I requested Paramānanda to please hold morning classes using *Prabhupāda Nectar 4*, as I like to hear his commentaries on the different *Prabhupāda* anecdotes. At least *Prabhupāda Nectar* will help us to remember that *Prabhupāda* is the topmost devotee, and all spiritual masters should sit at his feet and serve him.

August 10

“OH KṚṢṆA, HOW NICE YOU ARE”

If you decorate this temple very nicely, if someone comes and says, “Oh, this is all false,” isn’t that decrying the person or insulting you who created it? You prepare a nice foodstuff and decorate it and he says it’s all false. Why? So, it really means the person has no appreciation. He’s prosaic. He’s dull. He’s a rascal. But a devotee, they appreciate: “Oh Kṛṣṇa, how nice You are. How nicely You have manufactured the trees, the flowers, the sky, the planets, the sun,

the moon.” And he becomes overwhelmed with joy. “Oh, my God is so great.” But the rascal says it’s false.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture, Montreal, summer of 1968

Ability to write is a sensitive thing, just like a fine-tuned instrument. The things to write about are always there, eternally existing—Kṛṣṇa’s presence in the spiritual world, the material manifestation and all its particulars, and intimate relationships with Kṛṣṇa—but the ability to suddenly speak and to speak well is not to be commanded. It is up to Kṛṣṇa. So we say the dumb man can speak like a wonderful speaker. Everything is always there, full of meaning and potential poetry, but we remain sometimes dumb or sometimes too garrulous, but sometimes we are able to speak well in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by the grace of the *guru*.

When the ears that have been hearing Kṛṣṇa’s message turn to the sounds of nature, and when the eyes absorbed in reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* look up at the trees and the birds, or when the tongue that has been chanting and hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa turns to other speech—only then does Kṛṣṇa conscious vision of nature (*śāstra-cakṣuḥ*) spring forth. After hearing the select messages from the eternal world, then we can see through our purified senses Kṛṣṇa in everything, and rejoice in His greatness, even in the smallest things.

A bird I’ve identified as the Eastern peewee has been staying the last week or so in the trees around the cabin. The peewee has a simple, sweet three-note song. The song is like his name, just a little thing, but it has its distinct appeal. The same principle applies in songs or prayers praising Lord Kṛṣṇa. The feeling is what counts, not the expertise of composition. Prabhupāda gives the example of the crying child whose feeling is well-understood by the mother. But that genuine feeling is not easily come by nor can it be imitated.

A pure devotee can evoke God consciousness even from the rocks, but a hard-hearted dullard cannot see Kṛṣṇa even when

He stands before us in the Deity form.

August 11

I spoke with Paramānanda this morning about the temple presidents' meeting of North American ISKCON next week. His association is very assuring. He sees some of the intense controversial issues, such as the size of the *guru's vyāsāsana*, to be artificial, whereas the real substance is in personal dealings among devotees. In the course of our discussion he mentioned that some leaders do not allow their disciples to read my books because I present the image of *guru* as a devotee who is struggling.

In my opinion, both freedom from struggle and struggle are aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *guru* has to inspire his followers by his own confidence and well-being in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But if one has spiritual struggles, why not admit it? And what is the harm if a devotee reads that a fellow devotee is abiding in spiritual life despite the inevitable struggles?

On a TV show, Brahmananda once referred to Kṛṣṇa consciousness as "the yoga of emotion." At the time (1969) I found the definition amusing and a little too "emotional." *Bhakti-yoga* is more than emotion: it is philosophy plus sentiment. Yet without emotion, what is the value of life? Life means to have emotions, and in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, all our emotions are in relation to Kṛṣṇa.

Baladeva said the season seems to have peaked. I noticed this also. In the morning a few acorns fell loudly on the roof, and it's not uncommon to see a yellowed leaf twirling down from the trees. A certain vibrancy has gone.

The wasps' nest has definitely collapsed and everyone has vacated. The bottom fell out.

Late summer ease:
a yellow leaf falls.
I pray to serve
as He desires.

August 12

Peewee bird, why does your song cheer me up? Is it illusion? After all, you are just a *karma*-bound creature. And you sound like a bit of a cry-baby. You are also a cruel predator to the flies. Yet I take your notes as coming from Kṛṣṇa. He is the sound in ether. Some tiny bit of Kṛṣṇa's own self is expressed in your song. It is an infinitesimal fraction of the attractive melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute.

Last minutes before turning off lights for the night:

Is the Deity worship a minor thing? No.

Are the crickets and cicadas mundane? No—unless I make them so by mundane thought.

Are the heavy issues of management a fearsome burden? Only if I cringe from them.

Is this night an illusion, a temporary thing, a gone-forever day? Yes; in its outer casing it is *māyā*, but the devotional service performed this day—the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, the Prabhupāda remembrances—these are eternal.

Gītā-nāgarī Night

Crickets are background
to Prabhupāda's *bhajana*,
as one by one
devotees fall asleep
praying to Kṛṣṇa.

August 13, 6:00 A.M.

As I try to take a vigorous morning walk, the peewee signals to me from overhead. I'm hearing the 1969 "Yoga System" lectures by Prabhupāda. He says that Kṛṣṇa is in everyone's heart and a devotee should be compassionate to all living entities. He should give them education of their eternal relationship to Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda mentions even the cat, and says we should give it *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. We should not think that each living entity is Kṛṣṇa the Supreme, but he is related to Kṛṣṇa, and

therefore we see Kṛṣṇa in him. It is like seeing the father in his son.

Prabhupāda's example of the cat is appropriate to farm life, where cats live in the barn and drink the cows' milk and sometimes hear the holy name. As I heard the taped lecture, I passed the retired cows, who are also recipients of Prabhupāda's mercy. But I wondered about the trees, the birds, and insects.

After that 1969 lecture, Viṣṇujana asked Prabhupāda if it was a "vision" or "association" by which a devotee saw all living entities as part of Kṛṣṇa. "It is a fact," said Prabhupāda, "not a vision or association." And he further explained that the spirit soul in the cat's body is as good as any spirit soul, but due to misbehavior, past *karma*, he now lives as an unfortunate species. Thus by *paramātmā* vision, the effulgent spirit soul, as well as the Supreme Lord, dwells in the smallest human child, in the beasts and birds and even in the plants. A pure devotee always thinks how to give the deprived spirit souls knowledge of their relationship to Kṛṣṇa.

In this same lecture Prabhupāda also spoke of determination in practicing yoga. He said that determination is a bodily consideration; celibacy makes one strong to persevere. He said that if we try for a goal and do not attain it right away we should not lose determination. This is an appropriate meditation for me, since I have been trying for almost a year now to get well, without success. He said we should be confident that we will succeed sooner or later. Or if we do not succeed, then it is Kṛṣṇa's will also. "Even with the best doctors and medicines," said Prabhupāda, "a patient may not get well." If that is the case, then it is the "neglect" of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's will.

A Hint of Life

Crying without shame,
singing like you are the best bird,
talking some mysterious three-note code,
all right peewee, don't distract me
from hearing my master's voice.

I'll hear you later,
 come in the afternoon when I'm down.
 When I hear you just right
 it gives me a hint
 that even a small bird
 is standing somewhere
 full of life.

Advaita Ācārya has written in the *Saṅkīrtana Yajña*, asserting his viewpoint that I am ill because of the misbehavior of my disciples. He says this is based on the *śāstra* and also on his personal experience in treatment. He has tried all different medicines based on his research in chronic pain, but with no results. He describes the treatment as "a dead end." Therefore he concludes that spiritual treatment is necessary, and he puts the burden on my disciples.

My own realization of this is not very great. I accept that my disciples are a cause of my ill health because it is stated in the *śāstra* and Prabhupāda has directly stated that the spiritual master sometimes gets ill because of the misbehavior of the disciples. Just today I had to write a letter to a disciple condemning his illicit sex with another man's wife. And there are examples of other sinful acts. But I don't think it's proper for me to dwell on this so much. My main concentration should be my own purification and then my instructions will be potent and my disciples will follow. If they don't follow, and I have to suffer, then that is all right too. But I appreciate the statements of Advaita Ācārya and his spiritual analysis. He is the most involved of all my disciples in the material cure, so perhaps he best knows how futile it is. I am also reminded by his statements that my life must be dedicated to the welfare of others. Even as I desire to get good health, it should not be for my own enjoyment or well-being, but I should be well (or ill) in service to others. Śrīla Prabhupāda has placed his followers in a situation where we must practically live out the higher ideals. As we do so, we will please *guru* and Kṛṣṇa.

Gītā-nāgarī Night

Amid Prabhupāda pictures,

I talk with my disciples:

“This is all I’ve got.”

Alone in darkened room,

lightning flashes—

I speak His name.

August 14

“YOU DON’T SEE THE TREE, YOU SEE KṚṢṆA!”

When you see a tree, you don’t see a tree, you see Kṛṣṇa! A Kṛṣṇa conscious person is a philosopher. If he studies what is this tree, he sees it has a material body just as I have, but he is a living entity who, due to his past misdeeds, has now such an abominable body that he cannot even move. But his body is of material energy. Whose energy? Kṛṣṇa’s energy. So the tree has got a Kṛṣṇa connection; as a living entity he is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. In that way if you discuss Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you don’t see the tree, you see Kṛṣṇa! That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You don’t see the tree, you see Kṛṣṇa. So you have to practice like that. That is yoga. As soon as you see the energy of Kṛṣṇa manifested in different ways, it means you love that entity because you love Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, if you love Kṛṣṇa, then your universal love is counted. Otherwise it is not.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture, L.A., 1969

“You don’t see the tree, you see Kṛṣṇa.” And the white hollyhocks? And the young roses, buds closed at twilight? The bat circling in the dusk? The crickets and cicadas? Yes, in all these things the pure devotee sees Kṛṣṇa through loving relationship with Him. I cannot exactly explain it, and my realization is only beginning. But I know it’s a fact. Yes, even the jalopy parked on the road, and even the road.

August 15

“I just saw a big event down the road!” said Baladeva. He was out jogging and came upon a bunch of turkey vultures who flew away at his approach. He said there were no less than ten large vultures circling overhead. An animal must have died. Or are

they cursing the cows to die? There's a Bengali proverb—a vulture may curse the cow, but that will not hurt the cow. Śrīla Prabhupāda used this to describe the propaganda of atheists who claim God is dead.

But the vultures must be here for *something*—to attract such a gathering of vultures there must be a carcass. Inevitable as death. It's also a little frightening, I thought, "Maybe they'll swoop down on me!" But a devotee should not be afraid.

A Big Event

This sultry day
above the meadow, vultures gliding
and the crows are warning.

It occurs to me that if all my home, literature, and friends were taken away and my life itself threatened, the one thing I could turn to until the very end is the holy name. So *now* I should value and strengthen my relationship with the names of Kṛṣṇa. What is the *japa* garden but a place to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa? Everything else is secondary.

August 17

In ISKCON, should there be only one *guru* in a large geographical area and all newcomers brought to him for initiation? Should that *guru* be worshiped on a *vyāsāsana* with daily *guru-pūjā* ceremony such as we disciples hold for Śrīla Prabhupāda? Should that one zonal *guru* set himself above his Godbrothers in ways indicating that he is special and more spiritually advanced? Should he receive honor and privileges not given to his Godbrothers? The eight-year-old tradition of ISKCON, to operate with a few zonal *gurus*, which we have had ever since the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is being challenged, and basic changes are demanded by an assembly of Godbrothers and G.B.C. men who are meeting within a few days.

A few letters reach me and some visitors talk with me briefly about these issues. But everyone knows I will not be able to attend the meeting. I agree there should be changes to give the Godbrothers an opportunity to initiate. But the changes have to

go through the due process of law by vote of the world G.B.C. members at their annual meeting.

But even after changes, I will remain the spiritual master for my disciples, and my disciples and I will have the same responsibilities. ("Nothing will change," Paramānanda said, "whether you sit on the roof or sit on the floor.") The legacy of Prabhupāda's ISKCON is being discussed by sincere followers with a view to make it as strong as possible, but the various meetings which I would ordinarily participate in are beyond my capacity this year.

Working and hoping for strength to rejoin them.

My Godbrother Brahmānanda has recommended that I see an Indian doctor of natural hygiene who recently cured him of bronchitis. Now the doctor is in America with a strong letter of recommendation from Brahmānanda. Brahmānanda also phoned from New Delhi insisting that I see this man and give him a chance. Advaita Ācārya talked with the doctor, a Dr. Sarma, and said he sounded harmless, and perhaps there was a one percent chance that he could cure me. His specialty is monitoring diet, natural therapies, and creating a positive approach toward taking up occupational activities again.

Baladeva also has no objection to Dr. Sarma, and asked me what I thought.

I feel physically weak and mentally unenthusiastic about seeing new doctors with their special cures. I am more afraid of a relapse due to strenuous health crisis regimens than I am hopeful of regaining health "by the natural way." I have settled things in my mind into a simple framework that Kṛṣṇa is in control, and that at present I am too weak to try anything that hurts. Anyway, the talk of Brahmānanda's doctor has at least appealed to me enough to allow the man to come, and he is scheduled to arrive next week. I told Baladeva to warn him that he cannot expect me to be a good, submissive, believing disciple, but I will try my best within the bounds of a low state.

We are baking pies, and I am making fresh flower vases for

Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, and Balarāma's altar, white tube roses and miniature red roses which match Their clothes and altar pieces. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami Gurudeva plans to arrive tonight and leave early in the morning. He is kindly going out of his way to visit me en route to the big meeting at New Vrindaban.

In the past when we have met, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and I would make up an agenda of topics to direct our conversation. I've made note of the following: a report on my health; a discussion of the writing Gurudeva is doing; changes in the *guru* system in ISKCON and the upcoming national meeting; being a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* on a daily basis (this means performing Deity worship and writing but balancing these with managing work). Since I'm less involved than when we usually meet, I don't know if I'll be able to sustain conversation, except about my health, my present problem. Gurudeva even describes me as "absorbed in your illness." He doesn't mean that in a neurotic way, but as a fact. It's hard to be involved in much more. I don't intend to discuss the extent to which I am pursuing the *Journal and Poems*, because I think it isn't ready yet for much "publicity." But we will speak honestly. At least until my eye begins to ache.

Dāmodara dāsa, Janmāṣṭamī dāsa, and I were cleaning my room before the arrival of our special guest. I told them that if Gurudeva found anything strange in my room, he wouldn't be shy about it but he would pick it up and ask, "What's this?" So we took out my five-pound exercise barbells, as well as the hand-grip exercisers (neither of which I ever use). The poetry books had already been hidden, and my walking cane placed in a dark corner.

In the last minutes before Gurudeva's expected arrival, I spoke with Dāmodara and Janmāṣṭamī. I was supposed to remain silent and resting, but watching them both work so sincerely and submissively, I wanted to share with them.

"Are either of you musicians?" I asked.

They said no and sat down to hear what I had to say. I then described to them something musically wonderful I had heard on a Prabhupāda *bhajana* tape. It was in the song, "*Vibhāvarī-śeṣa*."

The song by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is mostly composed of different names of Kṛṣṇa. One name is *yāmuna-jīvana* (life of the Yamunā) and one is *keli-parāyaṇa* (He who is always absorbed in amorous pastimes).

So when Prabhupāda was playing, he suddenly began to improvise a minor phrase very thoughtfully and musingly, a tune different than the main tune, and he repeatedly sang, “*yāmuna-jīvana, keli-parāyaṇa*.” It was just great!

“Like improvisation?” said Janmāṣṭamī.

“Yes,” I said.

Janmāṣṭamī then recalled that in *Planting the Seed*, one hippie musician, Irving Halpern, gives his account of how he felt Prabhupāda was subtly exchanging with all the musicians he played with in Tompkins Square Park.

Music is another part of Prabhupāda’s complete personality.

Smooth as the best
improvising pianist,
voice as sweet as the singing bird,
God-gifted Prabhupāda
musingly plays
“*yāmuna-jīvana, keli-parāyaṇa*.”

August 18

Although some proposed changes in ISKCON may upset my disciples, I think there is nothing to fear. Our relationship is personal, and if the changes come through, we will be more than ever connected in a *guru-disciple* relationship which is based on loving service and personal choice. I think it can have that beneficial effect. Moreover, my disciples, as members of ISKCON, should appreciate it if we have actually solved problems which could also plague their generation in the future after my own disappearance.

Gurudeva has left me a copy of his drama, *Śrī Jagannātha-priya-nāṭakam*, which I promise to hear in the next few days.

In order to distract myself from my body and from my con-

finement, I walk into the woods. It's part of the recovery plan. I also go there for education.

Heavy action today: the crows are harrassing the turkey vultures. I was sitting under a tree where a vulture landed, and I could see him clearly—his down-bent beak and hunched, black shoulders.

The crows are so bold! Although less than half the size of the vultures, they come screeching and making feints toward the bigger birds. The disturbed vultures cackle but can't seem to do anything about it. Reluctantly, they flap their wings and glide out across open space. This only brings out more crows from the nearby trees. I am amazed at the courage of the crows, as they fly wherever the vulture goes, screeching close behind him. The piercing cries of the crows and the troubled cackling of the turkey vultures fill the woods.

The Stream of Death

Crows warn against me
and scare off the vultures
but fish can't heed —
a stalking heron stabs.

Bearing the burden, my words must reveal Kṛṣṇa, or else they are decorations of a corpse. Wherever I walk and look, my eyes must see Kṛṣṇa, or else it is only a forest of death.

I think of the *brāhmaṇa* of South India who pleased Lord Viṣṇu simply by meditating on active service. Because of poverty, the *brāhmaṇa* could not externalize his service, but he constantly thought of bringing gorgeous articles to serve the Lord.

If one is ill, he also may not be able to externalize his service, but activity must remain, the *desire* to serve.

1

He could not see Kṛṣṇa,
nor could he see the trees,
blind Sūradāsa.
But in his heart

he always prayed to serve Him,
and he sang the glories of the Cowherd Boy.
When he went to Vṛndāvana,
Kṛṣṇa came to him.

2

Vāsudeva the leper
lived in his affliction
like a buddha of compassion,
and never cursed the worm
who ate at his skin.
He chanted purely
and Lord Caitanya brought him
deliverance from distress.

3

Many *mahājanas* in suffering
show us the way:
Remember Kṛṣṇa
and He will deliver you
from limited pain
to unlimited bliss.

4

"But I can't work."
— Then sit and chant.
"But I can't chant."
— Yes you can,
just pray to Him,
"Please let me hear,
please let me chant."

8:00 P.M.

MASSACRE OF THE FROGS

A few nights ago, at midnight, Baladeva and the others woke up to shouts and flashing lights. I slept through it. About ten men were walking through the shallow creek. Even when the

devotees got up close, they could not see what the men were doing. They could see only that they had long sticks in their hands. Were they coming to attack us? No, they passed by our place and continued down the stream with their flashlights and sticks. Baladeva guessed that it was a frog hunt.

Ever since that night, we hear no frogs at all. It appears that they have killed all the bullfrogs, probably to sell their legs. It reminds me of accounts I've heard of brutal seal hunts or the mass slaying of whales. Now our natural neighborhood is robbed of the familiar croaking of frogs.

We know that animals are cruel, preying on one another. That is their nature, ordained by *karma*. But man has no natural reason or necessity for slaying all the frogs. He will also be paid back by the law of *karma*.

The absence of frogs also brings to mind accounts about the aftermath of nuclear disaster. Nature seems fixed and eternal, yet the human being, by his demoniac urges for destruction, can create imbalances, and even annihilate species, at least in local areas.

As for the frog hunters, it was a sport and business, an all-night August event which probably looted them a little cash.

The frogs were residents of *Gītā-nāgarī*, entitled to live here for their allotted time. Lowly and gross as they were, they had their lives to live. I was accustomed to hear them as part of the orchestra, along with the crickets and cicadas, but now I will notice their absence.

August 20

There will be a special world conference of all G.B.C. members, all temple presidents, and disciples of Prabhupāda to take place in New Vrindaban September 16–20. They will try to resolve vital issues regarding the spiritual master in ISKCON, the role of the G.B.C., etc., which could not be resolved at the national meeting. But it doesn't seem that I will be able to attend.

If I regarded this meeting as the most important event of my life, then I could attend, supported by big increases in medication. But it would probably lead to a repeat of my relapse earlier

this year at Māyāpur. (Even then, I could only make a token contribution.) And after the meetings, I could expect to have another collapse. Although it is an important ISKCON meeting, it seems more important that I try to repair my health so that I can fully participate in ISKCON for decades to come.

On the Path

Rabbit, did you hear?
There's a world meeting
and you and I can't go.

August 21, 7:00 A.M.

The first session with Dr. Sarma was promising. He stressed some of the same naturopathic themes that I've heard before—the importance of an unclogged colon, natural diet, air, water, activity, and sunshine. He hopes by my following his simple methods under his directions that my need for medicines and the occurrence of headaches will dwindle away.

For our first session, we sat out by the pond and did a simple breathing exercise called *ahiṁsā-prāṇāyāma*. It was more relaxed than the *haṭha* breathing exercise. He also suggested that every morning I should take three drops of water and say the names of God. He doesn't understand that the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* includes all other *mantras*. But there seemed nothing wrong with his request, so Baladeva got an *ācamana* bowl and spoon and I sipped three times, saying, *om acyutāya namaḥ*, *om anantāya namaḥ*, *om govindāya namaḥ*. Dr. Sarma said that, according to the *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*, Lord Viṣṇu once promised His devotee that if he sips water three times in the morning and says these names, he'll be free of physical and mental diseases. He also told me his own *mantra*, used while holding breath, *śrī kṛṣṇa śaraṇam mama*. His translation was, "I have surrendered to You, Kṛṣṇa, to do as You like." I told him we also approved of this attitude, and that we don't pray to God, "Please heal me of my physical malady."

I mentioned to Dr. Sarma that there was a very important world meeting of ISKCON on September 16, which would deal with reform of our spiritual institution. He advised that I just be

Kṛṣṇa conscious and detached, whether or not I attend the meeting. But in confidence he smiled and said, "You will go to the meeting." Baladeva and I just laughed. So with a few pinches of disbeliever's salt, we are proceeding again on a cure path.

Dr. Sarma tells me that I should be happier. He also advocates that I should not be so attached to "the institution." He says he has treated many *gurus*, and he often finds them too attached to their institutions, to the point of health-debilitating anxiety. I can see the positive aspect of this advice, but there are also times when unhappiness, anxiety over "the institution," is impossible to avoid.

August 22

This morning, while I had a headache, Dr. Sarma introduced me to deep relaxation or exercise. At his verbal suggestions I relaxed my body, starting with the fingers of the right hand, then the right arm, right side of the body, until the whole body relaxed. He then suggested that I "go to Kṛṣṇa . . . Hare Kṛṣṇa." My face almost broke into a smile hearing him say that, since "Hare Kṛṣṇa" is not his dedication. Nonetheless, I took the suggestion and began to chant silently.

I meditated on the pains I have been experiencing and prayed to Kṛṣṇa—"Please make me strong, please make me strong." I was praying to Kṛṣṇa to make me strong to deal with the stresses of my devotional service. I think it was a request as much for a kind of psychic armor as for freedom from headaches.

But after a while, it occurred to me that maybe Kṛṣṇa doesn't want me to pray like that. I began to think instead how He has been giving me lessons in dying. I began to appreciate that physical pains are a kind of blessing. When death comes (which may be at any moment), it is usually accompanied by pain. At that time when the route fully opens back to Godhead, there may also be pain. But if we recognize the pain as a sign of our coming nearer to Kṛṣṇa, then it is a blessing in disguise. So I prayed, "Let me serve."

I also thought of my habits of reading and chanting. I want to

read with my own eyes the prayers of Prahlāda Mahārāja and Prabhupāda's purports, and to study it deeply. I also reminded myself of the satisfying taste in reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and I lamented for my lack of appreciation in chanting, reading, and hearing.

August 23

Dr. Sarma and I have made a pact. He requests freedom of expression for his ideas and suggestions, although he acknowledges that I may not believe them. And I have asked him to accept the fact that I am in a weakened condition and cannot immediately stop medicines or start all his programs.

When Maṇḍaleśvara looked upon my writings about health, he appreciated it most when I discussed the inevitability of suffering. "This is the soul of philosophy," he noted. My back-and-forth discussions about trying to get well, wondering when I will get well, are my personal struggles. They are not the ultimate conclusion of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but the recordings of one struggling along the way.

Yet the struggle to return to active devotional life is also part of our philosophy — "How much do you desire to love Kṛṣṇa?"

Baladeva asked me, "How important is *sikṣā-guru*?" I replied that the real thing is how important a devotee actually is in your life as your spiritual guide. What a person feels for another devotee, when it goes beyond normal etiquette, is a voluntarily-given thing.

Similarly with *dikṣā-guru*. The formal etiquette required may be much more than that required to be offered to other devotees. But how much you give to him and respect him beyond etiquette is voluntarily given, based on your submission and how he inspires you as via media to Kṛṣṇa. This is already going on, but it has not been so openly analyzed before. More freedom is entering.

Self-Centered Headache

I am more important than the crickets.

To me, the squirrels are doing nonsense
 dropping acorns from a height.
 And the airplane motor is annoyance.
 Trees are standing silently, that's all right.
 I know the bugs have a right to exist,
 as long as they don't get too close to me.
 I know the grass has its place,
 and human beings.
 But I have a headache.
 Yet the orange marigolds are kind;
 they remind me of Kṛṣṇa.

Whenever we see a person suffering in this world, we know his reactions to sin are being reduced, and whenever we see a person enjoying, we know he is using up his pious credits. So illness is not an enemy in any case.

August 24

Awake all night for physical and mental reasons. I was in anxiety thinking of the nature of the ISKCON world meeting, and also the fact that I cannot attend it.

Being ill, I sometimes feel that life is passing me by. This may be especially felt at a time like this when ISKCON is undergoing such changes. Imagine a prominent American colonist suddenly getting ill during the time of forming the U.S. Constitution. He is bed-ridden and excluded from the making of history. Being sick is to miss out.

There is a counter-argument and I know I have to follow it. One's contribution to life (or to his spiritual master) is only as vital as his actual inner quality and character, not according to whether he is on stage during the epic events. History has also been shaped by people who were forced (or who chose) to stay back from the Constitutional Convention. America needed George Washington and Jefferson, but also needed Thoreau and Emily Dickenson. (*America needed Prabhupāda!*)

Anyway, I seem to have no choice. Short of some feat of mystic yoga, or Kṛṣṇa's sudden change for me, or unless I want to

risk whatever present advances I have made for physical recovery, I have no choice but to stay at Gītā-nāgarī and stay involved in recuperation.

7:00 P.M.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

After a difficult day with a headache, I spoke with Dr. Sarma. His attitude is that pain is a symptom of the body repairing itself, and I should regard it as a gain if I can endure pain without medicines. He would like me to stop all medicines, and says unless I do that I will never get well. Tomorrow Advaita Ācārya and Śamīka Ṛṣi, my two allopathic disciple-doctors, will talk with Dr. Sarma about this. But I know that they will not agree with him. They think it is injurious to the body if I endure the pain without getting relief. I have to decide for myself, but I tend to think that the druglessness is correct; it is more like the Kṛṣṇa conscious way. It is more based on *śreyas*, ultimate benefit, rather than *preyas*, immediate relief. But I have heard so often that it will be injurious if I let the pain increase, and I have also experienced some devastation. I would have to have faith enough first that by dropping the medicines it would not be injurious. Now I am seriously considering this, and I pray to Kṛṣṇa for guidance.

GOLDENROD

Almost all the first flowers have completely disappeared. Not even a sign of the bluebells or spring beauties. A few daisy fleabanes linger. The last blooming flowers of the year are making their appearance. Near my cabin, small orchid-like flowers, Virginia dayflowers, bloom for one day only. And goldenrod, an early sign of autumn.

August 26

My life is changing suddenly. 1) I have a new attitude toward disease and a way to overcome it. 2) My role as a *guru* and G.B.C. member may also change.

A walk in the woods is not the same as it was.

Apprehension comes that I may be about to experience considerable pain or humiliation. This morning it occurred to me that as a basis to these different apprehensions, I am actually feeling a fear of death. The possible changes are temporary—a headache, a change in my position in ISKCON—but they open up within me something more basic, the final apprehension.

August 27

Waiting for the events to crash over me like ocean breakers.

Three doctors were here at once, all disagreeing.

A plump acorn on the path, green and round. Leaves in the trees are partly eaten, some look shriveled, some yellow. Summer could still hang on for a month, but it may be mixed.

Brahmānanda Prabhu came today. We talked of nature cure, hygiene, and ISKCON crisis. He is like a new man from his naturopath practices. He very kindly thought of me while in India and he took his own cure seriously just so that he could be convinced to recommend it to me.

He stressed the importance of our gaining health so that we could serve thirty or even forty more years in these bodies. He reminded me that we should not compare ourselves to Prabhu-pāda, who even from the beginning of his preaching in New York City was given “the notice” that his time was up. Prabhu-pāda had no time to care for his health and did not practice many regimens, although he took his daily walk and massage. If we adopt full hygiene practices, it should not be seen as sense gratification or as deviation from Prabhupāda’s teachings, but as an important function for serving him as long as possible in this lifetime.

It is going well for me, now on the second day of complete withdrawal from allopathic medicines. They say I can expect a crisis period, but so far it has been almost miraculous—no medicine and no headache.

I have to pass through the ISKCON crisis also without its causing me to collapse physically. Now it appears I have a good chance to at least travel to New Vrindaban at the time of the

world meeting, although I cannot participate full-time.

My disciple, Baladeva, has helped me through my headaches and given me ease. When I get headaches, he also suffers in sympathy. Now he is also helping to ease me through the changes which may be evolving in our ISKCON society. Of course, the ultimate relationship of *guru* and disciple is unchangeable, as described in Vedic verses and Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports. But we may not be able to do it exactly as Śrīla Prabhupāda did it with his disciples. Anyway, ISKCON should operate harmoniously with all of its devotees in this and future generations to come.

August 29

Many of the same creatures as seen all spring—the large woodpecker, the numerous squirrels, the strong trees, the fish-killing heron—they're all here, but where am I?

Even if you're not in a peaceful mood, nature is a background. I'm noticing how strong the large trees are, their girth of trunk and bark strength. But I don't belong in these woods as a long-time resident, and so as I regain health, and as emergency duty demands, I have to get ready to say good-bye to this communing. Yes, you have been able to see Kṛṣṇa here, but now you must see Him elsewhere.

Out of my way, rabbit,
I'll leave you to the woods
as I go outward.

Just yesterday, I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture, describing the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra. When King Daśaratha asked Lord Rāmacandra to go to the forest, Rāmacandra immediately said, "Yes, I will go, father." Prabhupāda described that this is God's opulence of renunciation. Lord Rāma never considered staying and fighting. And many years later, after his exile was completed and He returned gloriously to Ayodhyā, He again displayed renunciation. When His wife Sītā was suspected unfairly and talked about by the citizens, He separated from Her.

So a king or leader should not fight to keep his position if the people do not support him or if they consider they want a change.

As a *sannyāsī*, I am attracted by the example of Lord Rāma, and I sometimes think it would be nice to be free of my administrative duties and to simply travel and preach. But this isn't what Prabhupāda wants for me.

Jhulana-yātrā

In a grove of maple trees
we swing Rādhā-Dāmodara
chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Golden in the morning shade,
wearing white wool *cādars*,
Jaya Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara!

Doesn't matter who you are,
guru, child, black or white,
you can swing Them for awhile,
gracious Rādhā-Dāmodara.

Held between two maple trees,
with foliage as Their backdrop,
the swinging Lords lightly smile;
you can swing Them for awhile.

August 30

Tṛnād api...

A small brown toad hops
across the brown path.
He's no big thing. Me too.

August 31

Today is the fifth day since I threw aside all pills. I told Dr. Sarma my quick recovery will be like a miracle. He said it is not a miracle but the natural state of being. The nature cure seems

quite compatible with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and also in tune with the health sayings and practices of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Dr. Sarma would like me to influence others to follow nature cure. I told him first let me practice it, then I can preach it. I already have a conviction by personal experience that allopathic drugs were useless and even harmful to my chronic condition. If I can actually gain normal status, it would be difficult and dishonest not to give credit to these natural hygienic practices, to follow them myself and recommend them to devotees.

The Year is Changing

Evening birds are gone,
brown seeds cling
and the marigold's odor is mature.
As you sense the year's turning:
Hurry up now
pray and serve Him.

3

September 2

The world meeting will not be a simple festival. For some it will be intense Kṛṣṇa conscious activity of the *kṣatriya* sort. For some individuals it will be harrowing soul-searching. Some will see it as a dangerous attempt of meddling with Prabhupāda's legacy, while others will see it as the long-sought purification of a gone-wrong system. For all members of ISKCON, the stakes are very high. We hope basic, needed changes may be made without increasing factionalism, and that all of Prabhupāda's disciples may become more satisfied to work together in the house he built.

September 3

Sananda Kumāra returned to Gītā-nāgarī today. I opened the door to the office and suddenly found him and Dr. Sarma conversing. I told them both that Sananda Kumāra had to be credited also for my getting well. Two months ago he said that his Āyur Vedic cure would bring a recovery in two months. Dr. Sarma said, "Perhaps," and Sananda Kumāra expressed how glad he was that I was getting better. We all agreed that it is Kṛṣṇa who makes us well.

The air feels humid and heavy. On the path you can smell the odor of different animals. This is not the freshness of spring.

I can't extract a Kṛṣṇa conscious message from the woods because of my own mental state. Changes in ISKCON dominate, and my body weakens as I fast for health. Maybe in a few days I'll be able to write something other than reporting what body therapy I'm doing or what phone talks I've had about the upcoming changes.

While walking into the woods I heard someone hooting: "Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hello Alarka!" It was Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa making the rounds on his bike to check on the retired cows and oxen. He said it is getting late in the year and the cows are getting thin.

Soon they will have to come back in to get regular silage. But still they submissively, peacefully munch on the remaining shrubs and bushes.

An orange-colored sun disk gently, slowly lowers in the sky. The rays shine through the hairs on the cows' tails as they switch off the flies. I remember how spring came very gradually: week after week there was no sign of leaves. Now summer goes gradually. One notices more brown leaves underfoot, yet everything remains green and dense.

My six months' confinement in Gītā-nāgarī is soon coming to an end. I have already left the monk-like concentration in solitude. But I loiter around the cows in a field, at sunset, savoring the old Gītā-nāgarī magic, if only for a little while. They are fortunate who live here in this village and follow Prabhupāda's dictate for Kṛṣṇa conscious farm life. He said their perfection would be that they never have to leave the farm; everything here is self-sufficient and they are satisfied.

September 4

"There may be some *mahā-bhāgavata* devotees among us," said Ravindra-svarūpa on the phone, "but Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *mahā-mahā-bhāgavata*. He is extraordinary! Śrīla Prabhupāda should have a place in our movement like Jesus Christ has in the Christian church." I replied, "But the problem with the Christians is they don't have a bona fide disciplic succession. You have to have representatives." Ravindra agreed but said that the representatives after Prabhupāda should teach by presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda and his order, not that they should present themselves.

I thought, "I'm already doing that, teaching by presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda. After all, I'm the author of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*." Yet I am not at all satisfied with my state of appreciation and remembrance and following of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Why?

Have I been weakened by the surrendered glances and close

approaches of ladies who filed up to the *vyāsāsana*? Have I been affected by holding myself above almost all other non-*guru* Godbrothers? Am I about to be released from a great burden? If so, it should be in order that I may take on another burden. Let the Vaiṣṇavas assign the burden, and let me try to carry it, although I am a small donkey.

Dr. Sarma has been readying me to do full-time service at the world conference. When I think of what a huge leap it will be to go from my present convalescence to that extraordinary duty, I doubt that it is possible. Baladeva also confirms that the real preaching work will begin after the world conference, when I may have to travel to temples and explain things to my disciples.

Brown acorn in sunlight on brown forest floor; a strong, warm breeze all day.

Today the *Vyāsa-pūjā* book arrived, a gorgeous, thick hard-bound edition. Looking at the cover, Śrīla Prabhupāda seated in front of the Pañca-tattva, I think that Śrīla Prabhupāda is much, much greater than I have appreciated so far. And this is the positive spiritual basis of all the unrest in ISKCON: have we who have followed him tried to assume some of the esteem and worship due only to him? Some will say no, we have to do his work and that includes following his example to act as *guru* and leader for millions of people, and that may include receiving honor as he did, on behalf of his spiritual master.

But since so many stalwart Godbrothers think there is minimization of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and since some of his prominent “successors” have grossly misbehaved, it is at least a possibility that we are acting too much like him. Let us more clearly rule on his behalf, as Bharata did by ruling Lord Rāma’s kingdom with Rāma’s slippers on the throne. Let no one mistake that we think we are as good as Śrīla Prabhupāda.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda’s orders are very deep,” said Ravindra. “It will take our whole lifetime to try and understand them and carry them out.”

At Maṅgala-ārati

When Dāmodara is too bright to see
look down one step—
Kālachandajī.

Rippling soft breezes from his hand,
last item of worship:
the peacock fan.

Headaches return, but this time no resorting to medicines.
Nature's cure: fasting, rest, sunbath, spinal bath, chanting Hare
Kṛṣṇa, a little Ganges water.

September 6

Yesterday was the meeting of our zonal leaders. Baladeva brought a letter from me and they discussed it. I offered that if many devotees are to become *gurus*, I should stop accepting more disciples. My Godbrothers seemed to accept that as an aid toward the solution.

But when I expressed also my willingness to give up G.B.C. duties if the ISKCON body so ordains, they gave me their official vote of confidence.

My imaginings of the world conference have a life of their own. Why so much anxious anticipation? Just go and see. See sincere devotees trying to rectify Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement. Maybe a few misguided. See the contending parties. And what shall I do there? Just go and see and try to serve. Śeṣa said, "If you want to play a role, preach purity." But how can I advocate it? Practice it.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami said he had a dream of Prabhupāda. He went before Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked, "Prabhupāda, what shall we do?" (What shall we do about the great difference of opinion of how to worship the *guru* and govern ISKCON?)

Prabhupāda in the dream said, "No one should be forced."

Prabhupāda has debunked material happiness as temporary relief from constant miseries. If in sub-zero weather a man

manages to keep himself warm with a big coat, he thinks he is happy. But if he only temporarily stops the blows of an opponent, is that happiness? When the natural condition is fatal, then where is the happiness? If I am forced to take birth, death, disease, and old age, where is happiness?

This morning I am feeling some of the happiness as relief from physical suffering. I feel grateful. That gratefulness can also be spiritualized provided we use our healthy mind and body in the service of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. That I intend to do, by His grace. In any case, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and thinking of Kṛṣṇa is a constant fact. I was hearing it last night while suffering and I am doing it this morning while relieved.

Last night I dreamt about a man who had become a leader in ISKCON, but then had turned out to be a cheater. He came to visit me. We were driving in a car, and I could see he was still crazy. But he had some remorse and expressed a debt that he owed to a particular person. "You owe everybody," I said. He became disturbed to hear this, and I feared his craziness. "You owe everyone your return to ISKCON," I said. This seemed to appeal to him, but I don't know if he will be able to return.

Tomorrow I will relish the sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's appearance into this mortal world. My only hope is the *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, and a desire to accompany Them to the cow barn.

Don't Die

Don't die along with the leaves.
Just see September roses,
abundant and lovely as spring.
& even when the roses are gone
your soul will always be young
with Kṛṣṇa and with Prabhupāda.
Don't think you're in your autumn,
don't die along with the leaves.

September 7, Janmāṣṭamī

Rādhā-Dāmodara wore an outfit made of Irish lace and brown

silk, obtained by the devotees of Ireland and sewn by the devotees of Gītā-nāgarī. In this morning's class, Paramānanda lectured extensively on cow protection and it was somehow exactly appropriate since Kṛṣṇa appeared to protect the cows and the *brāhmaṇas*. And that is the special relationship of the devotees here with Kṛṣṇa.

There will also be *darśana* of the Jagannātha deities at the cabin, and They are attired in Their own Irish lace and brown outfits, with large curvy crowns. The villagers will come to see.

But Hoover cutting corn
doesn't want to hear
today is Janmāṣṭamī.

Soft weather, seventy-five degrees, only once in a long while does a leaf twirl down. Kṛṣṇa-bhakta dāsa is washing the car. Late cicadas sizzle like summer. A perfect day to go out with the Deities. Or if you find time, it is a perfect time to walk and chant *japa*, rededicating yourself, and dreaming of maybe some wonderful yet unseen service you could do for Kṛṣṇa and Prabhu-pāda, if they would reveal it and give you the intelligence. Or should we do the same service, only send our roots deeper?

Fasting for Kṛṣṇa is advantageous in many ways. According to nature cure, it's the best way to cure illness. According to *The Nectar of Devotion*, we should control our mind and tongue and increase our chanting and thinking of Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhā-Dāmodara rode on the ox cart with Śrīla Prabhupāda sitting in front of Them. The tan ox, decorated with a headpiece, necklace, and anklets, pulled the cart from the temple along the same route as the Ratha-yātrā. The men in front sang the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and danced for the pleasure of the Deities. Women walked in back. Children ran as they pleased. The red-wheeled cart creaked along, providing a fairly smooth ride.

Coming out from the streamside path into the sunshine, Rādhā-Dāmodara emanated a light effulgence. We got a chance to get close to His upraised red foot, and to see Their faces from different angles in the woods settings surrounded by devotees.

In the barn, the Deities and Śrīla Prabhupāda were carried past the cows in their stalls. Some cows reached forward as if to eat the garlands or lick the Deities, but the Deities were kept at a distance. A new calf was displayed, but he wouldn't look up at Kṛṣṇa. Someone said, "Don't try to see Kṛṣṇa. . ." Ring in nose, Vṛndāvana the bull "smiled," showing his darkened teeth. Many cows looked up as Kṛṣṇa came near them. Then He left the barn, stood back on the cart, Prabhupāda was placed in front of Him, and the party headed out for the cornfields.

In the early evening, the *gurukula* children put on plays. The small boys did Sudāmā Vipra, with two different blue-faced boys playing the part of Kṛṣṇa, one at Dvārakā, and one when Kṛṣṇa was lost with Sudāmā in the forest.

The girls with brilliant costumes did "The Appearance of Kṛṣṇa," and they sang their lines. A group of singing narrators also moved the action along in a poetic manner, combining action, songs, and *mudras*. The play ended with this song:

"Dear Mother Devakī, within your womb
the Supreme Personality, Kṛṣṇa, has come.
He is appearing with Balarāma,
don't be afraid of Your brother Kaṁsa.
Lord Kṛṣṇa appears to fulfill His vow,
the pious protected and the demons destroyed.
Before creation He was existing
and within Him everything is resting;
after creation He will remain,
so He is the Truth for all time."

At eight P.M. I cooked *halavā* for Rādhā-Dāmodara and told old cooking stories, how I learned from devotees and from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and how we cooked *halavā* every morning in Boston. (Vidura dāsa said he was about to leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness but Pṛthu stopped him at the door with *halavā*.) Devotees stood around watching as the farina and butter mixed into a "wet sand" consistency then came together in the sugar water while we talked memories in ISKCON and about the memorable now.

Around 9:00 we bathed Rādhā-Dāmodara. His bodily hue is light gold, Rādhā is more golden. He has a natural silver peacock and black braids. Pouring *pañcāmṛta*—milk, honey, water, ghee, and lots more water—pouring the liquids over Their forms while devotees circle around Them, Līlānanda leading the chanting. As it gets late, excitement builds toward the midnight *darśana*.

... My devotees always see the smiling face of My form, with eyes like the rising morning sun. They like to see My various transcendental forms, which are all benevolent, and they also talk favorably with Me.

Upon seeing the charming forms of the Lord, smiling and attractive, and hearing His very pleasing words, the pure devotee almost loses all other consciousness. His senses are freed from all other engagements, and he becomes absorbed in devotional service. Thus in spite of his unwillingness, he gets liberation without separate endeavor.

—*Bhāg.* 3.25.35–36

September 8, Vyāsa-pūjā Day

There is a debate *how* to love Śrīla Prabhupāda. One party says we have mistaken his order by too much emphasis on his disciples who have become *gurus*. The other party says we can best remember Śrīla Prabhupāda by carrying out his preaching instructions, and that to try to tear down some of his senior disciples is not a real service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some say we should govern Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON more democratically or more brahminically, and they say that was Śrīla Prabhupāda's way. But some say his way was more autocratic.

All should agree that we cannot split ISKCON over these differences. There has to be some compromise. It cannot be settled by political power or threat. "Your fighting is killing me!" said the father whose sons quarreled with one another and punched the father's body when they were supposed to be massaging him.

8:00 A.M.

It's very dark in the woods, about to rain hard. Thunder is distant, but all around is dark, cloud-covered.

Leaves blowing. It's sweet when you have a cabin you can re-

treat to, and when your health is improving.

Lots of yellow leaves blowing down onto the creek and then sailing as individual, quiet rafts. Wind nowadays means leaves blow off. Do I view the season's change with alarm? What is the Kṛṣṇa conscious message? Do I see Kṛṣṇa here?

Even where I sit leaves hit my head and chair. A small yellow and red sycamore leaf falls on the page, and a brown maple leaf onto my arm.

It is Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance day, but the season shows the dying of plants. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers and his movement are not dying out. They are increasing. And we know this season-change is perpetual. To see the dying means later the long bare winter, but finally spring will come. Or if we count by millennial time, Kali-yuga begins, but then the golden period of Lord Caitanya's movement appears, and then more Kali, but then Satya-yuga. Of course, we are concerned with the immediate time we live in, and thus our ISKCON world meeting. We are concerned how the oratory and votes will go. And we are also concerned that the sincere desire of devotees for relief from trouble in ISKCON will manifest in pure change.

But the long view is also reality. We have to serve as long as we are able in this lifetime, and follow Śrīla Prabhupāda by cooperative effort. And when this life is over, we will go to serve him again.

Personally, the immediate changes will mean surrender and renunciation. So if we are forced to accept these things, it is welcome. *Vairāgya-vidyā* is the highest form of devotional life, so we should be glad.

The gentle shower of yellow leaves or even the wet hard rain, the inevitable autumn death signs, are really signs of eternal life in devotional service for one who sees it rightly. Blow on, wind, come down, leaves, our life is not so fragile. We cannot die, we cannot go to hell, we cannot be separated even at death from connection to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, because they have picked us up. Although we are fallen, they have changed us. Let it rain.

I read my *Vyāsa-pūjā* homage to Prabhupāda. Then I spoke about the upcoming world meeting, and I suggested that a spirit

of compromise might be advisable, since there were such opposing parties and the danger of an ISKCON split. Then Paramānanda spoke, and he assured the devotees that by their working together there is no fear of a split. He also agreed, however, that a spirit of compromise between strong opposing parties at the meeting would be in the interest of preserving ISKCON. But then Gour Hari spoke and he began to praise Prabhupāda for his uncompromising spirit. His point was obviously contradictory to mine and seemed to imply that the political compromise I was offering was something less than the pure absolute which Prabhupāda teaches us.

But if devotee A is uncompromising in his estimation of what Prabhupāda wants, and if devotee B is also uncompromising and yet is completely opposed to devotee A, then what happens? Śrīla Prabhupāda was uncompromising but we cannot imitate and say in an absolute sense that only we know what Prabhupāda wants. No one should put forward a view that contains compromises to Prabhupāda's teachings, and if he does so that will be exposed. But when it comes to matters of government structure and opinion, partisan parties sometimes draw quotes from Prabhupāda and scriptures in a motivated way and put forth their own view as absolute.

That may be done in a spirit of debate. But when the price is the keeping together of ISKCON, the partisans may have to settle for less than complete victory for their viewpoint. Is Party A so righteous that they are willing to drive out a large segment from ISKCON just to prove their point? Or is Party B so adamant that they will follow through with their threat and bolt from the institution just to have their way? My suggestion for compromise is also not absolute but is offered as guidance to the die-hard partisans. It may be useful, if a split appears imminent.

September 9

Dr. Sarma's nature cure treatment has already brought me to the stage where I am relatively free of headaches. I am not yet able to perform regular activities, and there are symptomatic weaknesses in different ways, and yet the first stage of improve-

ment is wonderful. Dr. Sarma himself admits that he is not the doer, but Kṛṣṇa Himself has brought this relief. The hygienic practices of nature cure are a part of natural living, and not the work of a doctor. Nonetheless, Dr. Sarma has been the carrier of this way of life for me, and I am grateful. The relationship of the doctor and patient of nature cure is an intimate one, and the doctor's close attention and concern are partly the cause of success in the treatment.

I am learning many valuable, detailed natural practices from him. At the same time it is painful sometimes to hear him quote Māyāvādī *gurus*. My policy is to overlook his non-Vaiṣṇava utterings and to extract the gold, as advised by Cāṇakya Pāṇḍita. Even when he quotes a Māyāvādī, it is often some general statement of theirs about controlling the tongue for health. But sometimes the poison impersonalism comes forth, and it is painful.

There are many warnings by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers that hearing from the Māyāvādīs and even hearing their names disturbs the mind. We hope that by associating with devotees and hearing the holy name, Dr. Sarma may himself become a devotee, and this is gradually happening. It is also difficult for me to explain to him and difficult for him to understand why it is better that he not mention the names of Māyāvādīs in my presence. In honesty I should explain this to him; it is preaching. As a doctor he can appreciate that it has no therapeutic effect but rather troubles me and even causes me to lose sleep, as I react to his uttering the name or the offensive statements of a Māyāvādī. Like many Indians, Dr. Sarma cannot understand why we object, and he sees it as sectarian. It will take a long time for him to understand the basis of the Vaiṣṇava's purity and the actual supreme position of Kṛṣṇa. He is in the typical position: he thinks he already accepts Kṛṣṇa as Supreme. It is also my duty to inform him of these things. Just as he is helping me to be free of material infection and wrong ways, I must from time to time inform him of his actual position.

I am not free of material desires. To see them in myself means I should be humble and honest to admit it. It means I cannot turn

to myself alone for help. I have to ask Prabhupāda to save me from this. I am not worthy; I can say that truly. I am going on in my service praying for protection. I'll do my service, but I cannot yet have the solace that I am pure in heart and mind and body. Please, dear spiritual master, let me go forward, let me come in this lifetime to be free of material desires.

Prahlāda Mahārāja said, "Oh my Lord, best of the givers of benediction, if You at all want to bestow a desirable benediction upon me, then I pray from Your Lordship that within the core of my heart there will be no material desires" (*Bhāg.* 7.10.7).

I must be intent to experience real devotional service. That means intent to serve the Lord with love by serving His pure devotee and performing any ISKCON task as ordered.

Disciples offer me obeisances. I want to be worthy. Many say it should not be done to the degree it is now.

I say order me to renounce and I will be grateful to you. Order me to continue my present duties and I will be grateful. Give me the authorized direction, for I am a menial to Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement. My tendency may be whimsical. So I need your order, Vaiṣṇava Godbrothers. I am recovering my health to follow that direction. I am an impressionable fool and a headstrong free thinker—from these dangerous tendencies I need protection. But if I place my life in your hands, direct me with intelligent compassion.

By *guru*, *śāstra*, and *sādhū* I know what I am supposed to do. There are choices, but Śrīla Prabhupāda's will must be done.

Prahlāda Mahārāja said, "Oh my Lord, I am Your unmotivated servant, and You are my eternal master. There is no need of our being anything other than master and servant. You are naturally my master, and I am naturally Your servant. We have no other relationship" (*Bhāg.* 7.10.6).

Purport: "... The real master commands, 'You must do this,' and the real servant immediately obeys the order. Unless this relationship between the Supreme Lord and the subordinate living entity is established, there can be no real happiness."

Big Conference

Why do they congregate,
all talking at once?
Late summer chickadees.

"The Country is Made by God"

Final summer concerts:
cricket tones, cicadas,
the same rippling creek.

September 10

Hearing *Rāmāyaṇa*, of Rāma's serenity. Although banished to Daṇḍakāraṇya forest, His countenance and His soul remained untroubled. Even when He faced His grief-stricken followers, He showed no grief, although it was His personal misfortune for which they lamented.

Like a horse under lashes, He was sent into exile by Queen Kaikeyī, but He accepted it as sacred duty. When Bharata came to the forest and asked Rāma to please return to His throne, Rāma asked him to accept the spirit of resignation and keep true to the order of Their father. Lord Rāma told His younger brother that life's changes are inevitable. Everything ends in death, and the sole thing a person can retain in life is his own good acts. Nothing else is worth striving for. Therefore, no one should weep over lamentable situations in life.

But when Rāma's duty was to fight and recapture Sītā, He fought ferociously and subdued Rāvaṇa and all his empire.

Corn harvesting has begun. Just as we went to see it, devotees were also herding cows from one pasture to another. Dogs running and barking, a man speeding in a car to head off the cows, men on foot running full speed after the cows—and in the cornfield, Paramahansa dāsa driving the big tractor, pulling the noisy corn cutter which smashes the whole stalk and cob into a mushy substance, and across the road Bhakta Ray working another loud machine which shoots the corn stuff up a sixty-foot

tube to the top of the silo, winter feed for Kṛṣṇa's cows. Everyone keeps working until it gets too dark to see.

Bhūbhṛt dāsa sits outside the *brahmacārī* farmhouse chanting his last beads of the night.

September 11

In Book One of *Journal and Poems* I stated that disease is inevitable—birth, death, disease, and old age come to everyone who lives in a material body. But I am learning more that the intensity of disease can be regulated by hygienic principles. And the less disease we have, the more active service we are able to perform.

Prabhupāda has described that a *yogī* is less prone to illness than a *bhogī* (sense enjoyer), and a *rogī* (diseased man) is defined as one who eats too much, three or more times a day. There are many statements affirming that a spiritualist can be relatively free of disease. (Śrīla Prabhupāda: "There are three causes of disease: overeating, uncleanness, and anxiety.")

Śrīla Prabhupāda's emphasis was to stay transcendental in all circumstances. As he wrote to a disciple in 1968:

... Physically and mentally we may be disturbed sometimes but we have to stand erect on the spiritual platform. I may inform you in this connection that I am at the present moment physically unfit; I'm having always a buzzing sound in my brain. I cannot sleep soundly at night, but still I am working because I try to be in my position of spiritual platform. I hope you shall try to understand me right and do the needful.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was a unique example in his ability to work even while ill. He also gave all of his followers a legacy of a very demanding mission—to preserve and expand his ISKCON. We may try to endure illnesses and remain active while physically unfit, but it is better for us to be free of disease than sick and tolerating pains while in bed.

For a year I have been on the sidelines and while I have tried to maintain my Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I have yearned to be active as Prabhupāda would want me to be. I remember when I fell ill as his traveling servant in 1974; I could hardly do any duties, while he went from India to Rome to Geneva. Prabhupāda did not

seem enlivened by my sickly presence, and he mentioned that he might have to leave me behind. He later remarked that my illness was due to uncleanness.

Dr. Sarma claims that the hygienic principles of nature cure are actually the original Āyur Veda as given in the Sanskrit texts. Sananda Kumāra, a graduate of an Āyur Vedic college in South India, admits that Āyur Veda has all but died out in India and is now a mixture of allopathy and concocted medicine—given in the name of Āyur Veda. Let me practice more and gain more health so that I may be able to help others with a growing conviction: although disease is inevitable it can be greatly minimized and health can prevail as the main condition—health for using in *bhakti-yoga*.

This morning I thought of another *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* passage which substantiates the claim that natural hygiene has an important part in Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

If one lives otherwise [than as a *brahmacārī*], it will manifest in the lust visible in his face and body. The word *vidyotamānam* indicates that the *brahmacārī* feature showed in his body. That is the certificate that one has undergone great austerity in *yoga*....Kardama looked healthy because he had directly received the nectarean sound vibrations from the lotus lips of the Personality of Godhead. Similarly, one who hears the transcendental sound vibration of the holy name of the Lord, Hare Kṛṣṇa, also improves in health. We have actually seen that many *brahmacārīs* and *gṛhasthas* connected with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness have improved in health, and a luster has come to their faces. *It is essential that a brahmacārī engaged in spiritual advancement look very healthy and lustrous.* [*italics mine*]

—purport, *Bhāg.* 3.21.45–47

I remember in the early New York City days a devotee once complained to Prabhupāda about bad health and Prabhupāda replied, “A real *brahmacārī* never gets sick.” This is an ideal statement, but it is also attainable. Certainly it is important, because in ill health we become a burden, and if health does not return, we begin to feel like a has-been.

On a solitary path

I speak
in my own voice.

Not blooming yet?
What's the reason?
Closed blue gentian.

Blue sky, September light:
this is but a fraction
of His splendor.

September 12

The weather changed today, below fifty degrees all morning. Devotees bought me new sweatshirts and knit hats. Soon we will stop using the peacock fan.

My disciple R. dāsī visited me. She had left her husband and run away with another man, but was persuaded by her brother to come back. I asked her to spend a day at Gītā-nāgarī before I spoke with her, and suggested that she should pray to Kṛṣṇa for the answer. When I asked her if she had reached any resolve, she said that she had decided to do whatever I said. It was simple, straightforward preaching for me, upholding the religious principles. At first she said that since she had now committed a scandal, she might as well go all the way and be completely scandalous. Her other argument was that she was now attached to the man whom she had sinned with. I told her that devotees are kind and will forgive her for mistakes. She can become glorious for coming back to Kṛṣṇa after a serious mistake. I told her how I had stopped taking my medicines abruptly even though there was supposed to be some withdrawal pain, and how by Kṛṣṇa's mercy that pain was reduced. Similarly there would be pain of attachment as she cut off relationships with her "lover." But eventually this renunciation would lead her to the real happiness. Real happiness is when we do something right and feel the peace and righteousness.

In the mail, I received a discouraging report about the present conditions in the Potomac temple. Many devotees do not attend

the full A.M. program, most departments lack heads, essential services are done in a stop-gap way or missed, many devotees do only a little service and won't do more, and the finances are bad, getting worse. This seems to be the greatest degeneracy that has occurred during my long absence.

When I stopped there in March there was hope and enthusiasm and things were on the rise. Now they are sinking. Something has to be done.

Lord Jagannātha's paraphernalia is ready for travel. Leaving this cabin, this farm, this state. I am grateful to the Lord for putting me in a position of illness, and now for beginning to let me free. I hope I do get stronger and can do His service without cringing.

September 13

TRAVEL DAY

We are heading for the conference in a spirit of adventure. We are going to have good fun. We are trying to be truthful, neither believing entirely in those who say we are all good, nor accepting exaggerated attacks on our misbehavior. We are going to be involved but not attached. We will depend on Kṛṣṇa and follow His advice to be equipoised in fame and infamy.

GOD IN THE SKY

En route. Sometimes we do photographic work, like in the latest BTG, wherein we placed Kṛṣṇa in the sky over Vancouver. So He is there, placing Himself on the altar, in the heart, in the mind, in His name. But He will not manifest for the nondevotee who scorns His appearance in each place as "idol worship."

The devotee may receive Him from authorized sources and be assured — "This is Kṛṣṇa Himself." But if you mumble the holy name, it will not give you the full effect; it is the shadow of the full name.

Thoughts of Kṛṣṇa come while lying in the back of the car, 60 miles per hour past billboards of MacDonald's, Wendy's, Scottish Inn, Howard Johnson.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, please bring me close to you, hankering to hear your lecture, to do your mission as you have assigned me. Let this New Vrindaban visit smash my illusions, and bring me meekly unto you, staunch for facing your tests. I do not pray so deeply, but I am talking unto my masters, avoiding absorption in the highway *māyā*.

REST STOP

The doctor points out, "There is alfalfa." Good for eating as sprouts, a source of protein. I point out, "There is goldenrod." Good for use in September poems. But I have no poem, just goldenrod, Kṛṣṇa's goldenrod. In this field behind the Exxon, there is also some daisy fleabane and milkweed, blooming better here than at shady Gītā-nāgarī. All I can do is put His name in front of all I see.

Here's Wendy's junk food
and here's nutritious—
ether, air, sun, water, earth,
both bad and good is Kṛṣṇa's will,
for He is the all-pervading Truth.

NEW VRINDABAN

We have a very nice, secluded house.

I was just reading an edition of the *Brijabasi Spirit*, an interview with some guests who came to New Vrindaban. They said they experienced more life and expansiveness and openness at New Vrindaban than they did at other ISKCON centers. That's right, New Vrindaban is very special, but I then began to feel inferior and unworthy. Of course, one isn't expected to measure up to New Vrindaban, but I thought, "Where is my project?"

Then I read the diary accounts of our travel here and they seemed feeble. Neophyte meditations on the highway, trying to think of Kṛṣṇa, and trying to write poems. Anyway, we're in a good location for doing health therapy and keeping secluded when the tremendous influx of devotees comes for the five-day meetings.

There is a backroad path here, like at Gītā-nāgarī. Goldenrod growing over six feet tall, artistic, large butterflies, a yellow and black one and a purple-black one. By the house where we're staying an apple tree is heavy with its fruit. A large black hawk is circling overhead and gliding into the valley. This is a good time and place to chant extra rounds. A feeling of calm before the storm. I'm thinking, "What is it I'm supposed to do, what more am I supposed to do?"

New Vrindaban Dusk

Too early for the autumn moon,
but it's cold.
Walking chanting *japa*.

Crickets and a star.
Here also
Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

September 14

Sometimes the larger institutional issues seem external and political. But they also have to be taken care of, because we are a worldwide institution. As Prabhupāda said, "Unity in variety and variety in unity." Everyone has to be allowed to develop on their own, but there has to be a government, and a standard which one can find in ISKCON temples everywhere.

Bhaktipāda came to the house bringing two new books, his *Christ and Krishna*, and *The Hare Krishna Explosion* by Hayagrīva dasa. Umāpati came too and we talked about the ISKCON meeting, about doctors and other things. Bhaktipāda is writing a position paper about the *gurus*. As he left, getting into the driver's seat of his truck — his youthful, joyful smile.

I am here mostly for moral support to the ISKCON cause. My main service is health recovery. Making it clear to myself and others that I won't be attending much of the meeting: "I have my medical excuse," I said. Bhaktipāda laughed and said, "And I have my mental excuse" (for not attending the marathon opinion exchange).

I claimed I was writing about nature (forest birds, flowers, etc.) only because my illness confined me to Gītā-nāgarī. Not true. Bhūmi, the earth, is one of the seven mothers. Kṛṣṇa is here.

More open air here in the hills and dales. Terrace farming. On the path to our house, fully ripened ink berries and wild purple “paper” flowers.

Today and tomorrow will be easy-going, picnic on the front lawn, sunbathing, and visiting hours only 10:00–11:00 A.M. and 4:00–5:00 P.M. Today Kṛṣṇa Gopāla came. K.G. and I spoke frankly. We agree that we should form a statement of goals for preaching in the D.C. area. But he’ll have to present his strategy to our Zonal Board. He agrees. Open communication is better than misunderstanding.

September 15

Śrīla Bhāgavatapāda came to talk. “I’ll follow whatever the mandate is for ISKCON,” I said. Bhāgavatapāda said, “But we have to take part in forming that mandate.” Somehow, I am not so worried about it. Maybe I’ll get more stirred up as I associate with the different devotees holding strong opinions, and when I see the arguments go back and forth at the meetings. But for now I think I can give assurance to whoever talks to me or especially those who have worked with me that I think Kṛṣṇa consciousness is more enduring than these institutional changes, and that the worth of the *guru*-disciple relationship is a personal matter which endures or doesn’t endure, depending on the genuine reciprocation. It does not depend on whether or not we hold *guru-pūjā* every day.

As for power and control, I am ready (I think) to put on deerskin and go to a Daṇḍakāraṇya forest if I am asked to do so by the authorized order.

Praying I don’t get overwhelmed by others’ strong opinions. Praying to be like Śrīla Prabhupāda, who even during the Bowery days, when approached by skeptics and challengers, was “joyful and confident.”

I don’t have a solution to the *guru* issue or the ISKCON gov-

erning issues, and I can barely grasp what the issues are to have my own opinion. More gurus? Yes. Less worship? Yes. Vyāśāna—yes, one for all the gurus and one for Śrīla Prabhupāda. G.B.C.? Keep present members, add to it as qualified. Don't have exposés, muckraking, heavy lobbying from different interest groups.

SOME MAIN POINTS OF RAVĪNDRA-SVARŪPA'S ESSAY, "REFLECTIONS ON BRAHMINICAL MANAGEMENT"

For Ravindra-svarūpa, "brahminical management" means management by a group of people who discuss issues together and then reach a consensus about what to do. Ravindra would rather see ISKCON managed by groups instead of by individuals.

The ISKCON manager, according to Ravindra, should be an unattached, renounced preacher who trains up his subordinates to apply Kṛṣṇa consciousness in their own lives. Ravindra rejects the idea that zonal ācāryas should be like popes holding a position.

SOME MAIN POINTS OF HARI-KṚṢṆA DĀSA'S ESSAY, "THE ISKCON ORGANIZATION"

In "The ISKCON Organization," Hari-Kṛṣṇa dāsa examines the problems presently facing ISKCON. He feels that zonal councils and other committees should be set up throughout ISKCON to provide a system of checks and balances for ISKCON managers.

September 16

FIRST DAY OF THE ISKCON WORLD MEETING

Big ISKCON family attended the *maṅgala-ārati*, as at the annual Māyāpur meeting. After the *ārati*, Bhaktipāda made announcements. He said that the most important meetings will be held in the temple each morning, consisting of *maṅgala-ārati*, *Bhāgavatam* class, greeting of the Deities, and *guru-pūjā*. According to our philosophy, differences will be solved ultimately by these transcendental meetings, and not by the elaborate parliamentary meetings. He's right, but hundreds who have traveled here to New Vrindaban have not come to attend the

temple programs, but the open meetings.

The meetings will start at 9:00 A.M. and are supposed to go to 5:00 P.M. each day.

I saw Pṛthu, Bhūrijana, Pañcadraviḍa Mahārāja, and many others briefly, then came back here.

"See you at the meetings," I said to Pṛthu.

He replied cheerfully, "Yes, *dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre*."

"I just came from Philadelphia—your zone," said Pañcadraviḍa Mahārāja.

"It may be my zone now," I said. "But after these meetings, we may be lucky to leave with our shirts on our backs."

"At least we'll have our *sannyāsa* top-piece," he said.

I also spoke to several devotees about their ill health. Kuṇḍalī had gone to Virginia Beach and found a house there for the purpose of starting a preaching center. But he got asthma attacks each night that he was there, a disease he's had since childhood. A doctor told him it's very bad in Virginia Beach for asthma. Now the preaching center is threatened. I told Kuṇḍalī about Dr. Sarma, who claims that he can cure such diseases by nature cure process. I also met Indradyumna Swami, who had lost his voice and is just recovering. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami also wants to come out to see Dr. Sarma. But they have to be willing to follow a pretty strict diet.

The G.B.C. met separately and discussed procedures for the larger *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī* meeting. There was discussion of whether the active followers of a schismatic leader should be allowed to attend. Someone said he overheard a schismatic follower say to a devotee, "Why don't you come and preach with us?"

"I'm happy where I am," the devotee replied.

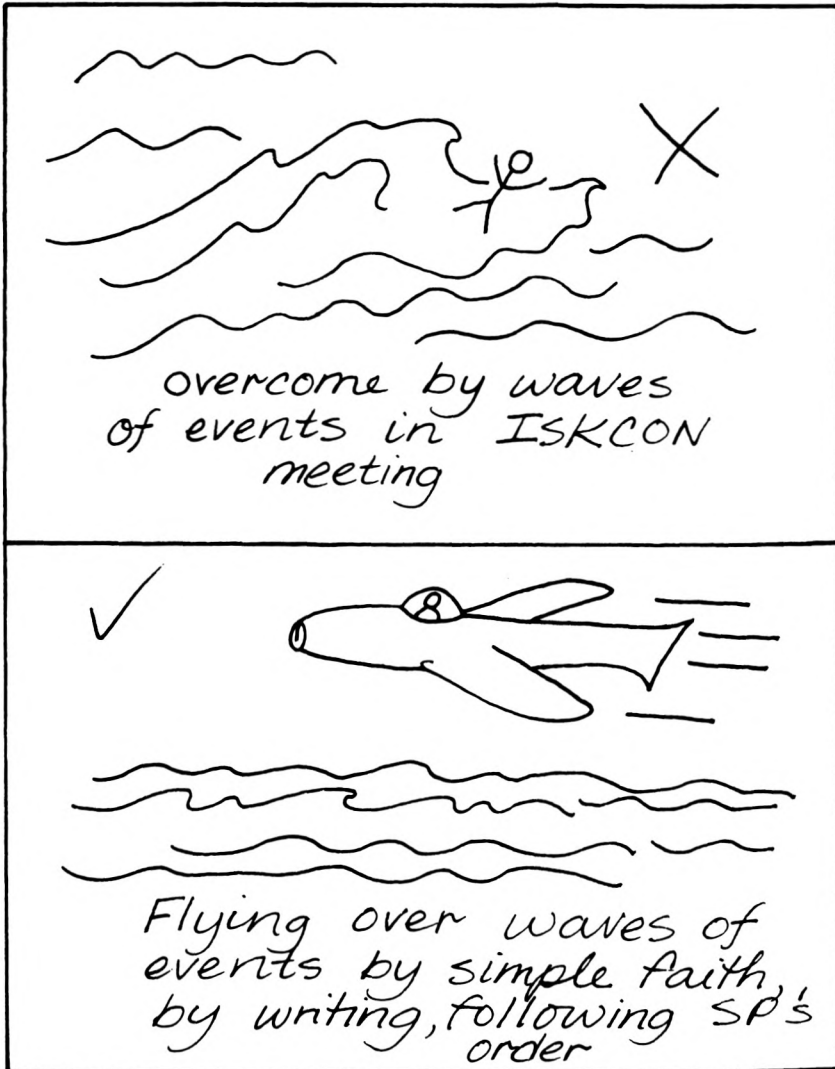
"What will you do in three days when ISKCON splits?"

Jagadīśa Goswami said there are two basic opposing views in ISKCON. One view is that the Society is in very serious trouble, and the other view is that there is no serious trouble except that some people are saying there is very serious trouble.

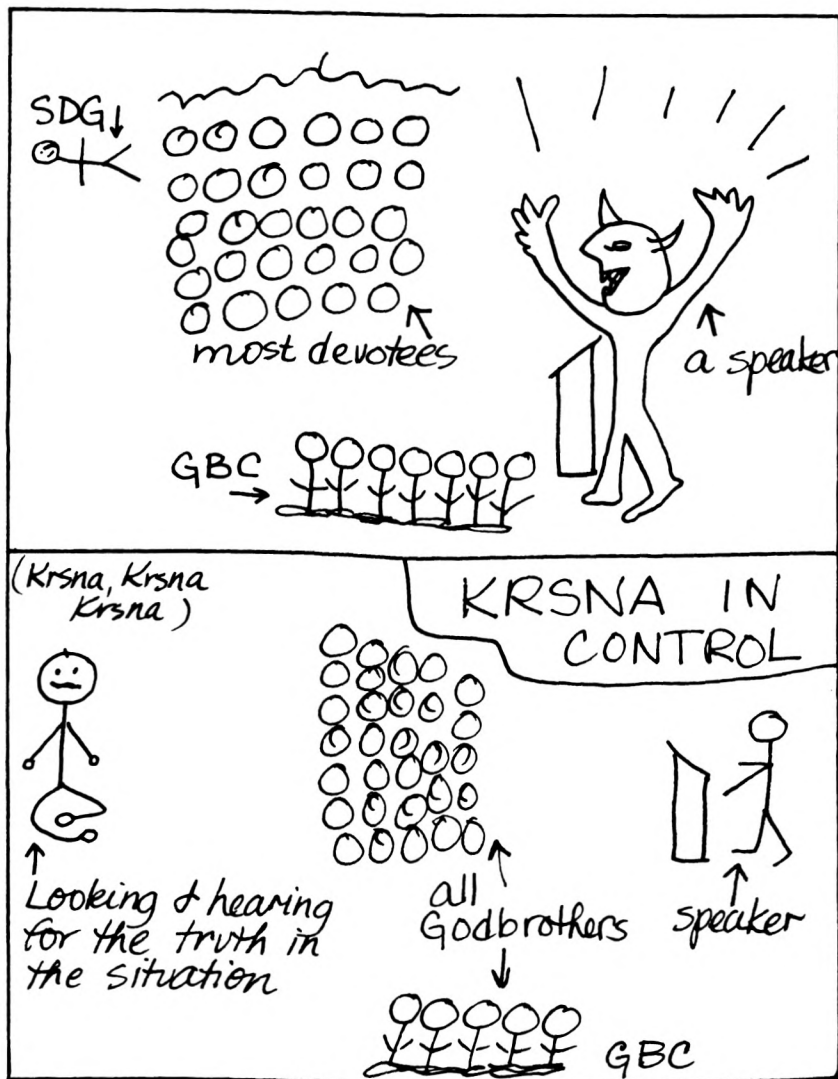
Bhagavān Goswāmī said the real issue is "whether we are an

A.B.C. or a G.B.C., a Governing Body Commission or an Advisory Body Commission."

I drew a stick figure of an individual being tossed in the



violent waves of an ocean. The caption was, "Overcome by waves of events in ISKCON meeting." Then I drew a second picture with horizontal view of the ocean, and overhead a jet plane was safely speeding. The caption was, "Flying over the waves of events by simple faith, by writing, and by following Śrīla Prabhupāda's order."



7:00 P.M.

The *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī* this afternoon was intense, and I had to leave before five o'clock with a headache. It is hard for me to describe what happened since I am so much personally involved. It will probably take more time before I can realize it more. But since I am on the scene, I must try to describe some of the events.

September 17

SECOND DAY OF THE ISKCON WORLD MEETING AT NEW VRINDABAN

I had an all-night headache and I'm not able to attend the meetings. I'll attend in the afternoon. I got information about what went on in yesterday afternoon's meetings, and it's more of the same. They are complicated issues, but mainly there's a feeling that there must be a change. But there is resistance to this change. I agree that there should be change, although I don't have a deep feeling of guilt or wrong about what I've been doing, and I don't find so much a sense of that either in my G.B.C. Godbrothers. I mean I can't enter the hearts and activities of Godbrothers to understand just how wrong they are or how devious they are and make a judgement on them. I can certainly hear that many Godbrothers are displeased. If we all were very responsive and surrendered, that would be better.

I really don't know how it will end but I'm certainly caught in between both ways, being condemned categorically and sympathetic to both sides. The devotees here are representatives of the world of ISKCON, but not entirely. But they're pushing everything through by force of their enthusiasm and conviction.

It's an ordeal and a purification that I am willing to go through, and I regret that I haven't got the physical capacity to partake in it fully. Wanting others to think right of me, I also regret that they may think that I am not able to take part because of some kind of moral weakness, which is not the fact. The pressure of these events may trigger off headaches, as would any intense event, and no doubt many others at this meeting are getting headaches. But for them the headache is suppressed by a pill or lasts for a few hours on its own, whereas my headaches will go on for twenty-four hours. So there's the old syndrome of

the person who's still convalescing trying to be understood by the vital, healthy ones. And that is occurring at a time of more intense demand than ever. So I have to just take care of myself first, partake in the meetings as I can, make my own position clear. After all, I'm not going to decide everything. I'll just do the best I can at this meeting, and the best I can after this meeting, with the aim to cooperate with Godbrothers, devotees, and disciples in ISKCON.

I'm worried that I'll get sick at the meeting; that harsh words will be spoken and controversy will arise—especially that which points out that I have been a villain—worried that this conference will lead to splits in ISKCON.

Despite my drawing of a man in a plane flying over the ocean, I fell into the ocean of sick body and anxiety. Dr. Sarma warned me that a negative mental attitude will bring about more illness. But Dale Carnegie cheerer-uppers won't always suffice. But he's right. There's no reason to worry, one just has to depend on Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa and then the whole universe is without anxiety, no matter what people do or say. Real honor is to do one's best according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's expectations, and not to fail him. Public opinion is sometimes a different thing. So I should try my best and make a serious but lighthearted attempt to survive in the meetings. But if I have to leave the hall, no fear.

At a revolutionary meeting, what is permanent?

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda is my spiritual master and I have an eternal relationship with him in devotional service.

2. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, everyone's well-wisher.

3. Nothing happens except by the will of Kṛṣṇa. No one can fully understand why He acts, but He acts for our good always.

4. Śrīla Prabhupāda has ordered me to chant sixteen rounds of the *mahā-mantra* daily, and I must always avoid the four sinful activities.

5. According to my capacity I should engage in preaching work.

6. I should live in association of like-minded devotees and worship the Deity.

Whatever I have done so far as eternal devotional service cannot suffer loss or diminution. On Śrīla Prabhupāda's order and the confirmation of his G.B.C., I initiated disciples and I am acting as their spiritual master according to the understanding of *guru-śiṣya* as given in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. By similar orders I have been trying to act as G.B.C. since 1970. There are similar orders such as editorship of BTG magazine, and *sannyāsa* order. Therefore changes by votes or whatever cannot change whatever service Śrīla Prabhupāda has given or whatever he has kindly accepted from me.

With so many assurances of permanence and services given by Prabhupāda, I should not fear changes. The essentials will remain, and so will my right to serve him.

6:00 P.M.

The hall—fluorescent lights, white ceiling, yellow floor, bright wood paneling—maybe four hundred devotees present, disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. This afternoon seemed to be a more genial air. There also seems to be more of a balance in terms of cheers and applause for different points of view, rather than just for one point of view.

Me, a nonentity watching the fun.

My mind was ranging over all the possible changes that might occur in my service. Maybe it won't be so drastic after all.

SOME POINTS FROM ŚRĪLA BHAKTIPĀDA'S, "ON HIS ORDER"

Bhaktipāda says the spiritual master should be above suspicion, and that he should reject opulent offerings and perform *sādhana* openly if this is what it takes to be above suspicion. He says we should rely on *guru*, *sādhū*, and *śāstra* to solve all problems in ISKCON rather than our own mental speculation, and

he emphasized that the *guru* should be worshiped as good as God by his disciples.

After Day's Meetings

1

Wildflowered walk,
why is my heart joined
to these quiet places
watching His ways in the woods?

2

A walk under blue skies
inclines us to pray:
"Make me a man
in your active service."

September 18

THIRD DAY OF MEETINGS

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami came to the house this morning and we talked about his next writing project. His devotion to writing is inspiring. He says that by Deity worship, by writing, and by chanting the holy name, he feels self-sufficient and engaged for going back to Godhead.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami also said what we need is to become pure devotees. I would like to ask him his idea, how do we become pure devotees? Is there a more practical, deliberate way to take that up than we have been doing?

9:00 A.M.

Baladeva phoned from the meeting room and said my attendance wasn't required yet. The temple presidents are having a separate meeting and are forming a controversial proposal. The G.B.C. will meet later this morning to deal with it. It sounds like more fun, just when I thought things were getting quiet. Let me return to my list of "permanent things":

My typewriter, my pen, and paper. My free verse praises of Kṛṣṇa, who can stop it?

I waited most of the day without any meetings. Finally at 3:30 there was a G.B.C. meeting. A few temple presidents also attended and everyone discussed a proposal for how to expand the *gurus*.

After two hours I was not able to stay any longer.

September 19

FOURTH DAY OF MEETINGS

Even to contemplate the cause of these meetings requires great compassion and intelligence. My notes of these meetings, by their sketchiness and by the fact that I am not even attempting to fully capture the phenomena, may seem like another symptom of the leaders' failure to realize and regret. I acknowledge this inadequacy in myself and in these notes.

The fact remains that the added strain for me of trying to deal with a physical illness makes it impossible for me to attempt more strenuously to describe what is happening.

I tend to think, "I am not my brothers' keeper." But that attitude, by which I absolve myself of the wrongs committed by other ISKCON leaders, is not much appreciated by thoughtful moralists. Nevertheless, one cannot solve all the problems of the world, even if one is a leader. One can tend to one's own garden and try to develop Vaiṣṇava relationships fairly with those with whom he is working closely. (In his essay, Bhaktipāda quoted Emerson's statement that an institution is only the length and shadow of a man.)

I am trying to realize, regret, and rectify any wrongs I have done my Godbrothers by virtue of my assuming the elevated responsibilities of *guru* and G.B.C. But it is unfortunately difficult for me to do very much about the wrongs that may have been committed to others in all different parts of the world of this great movement.

For me to increase my compassion or to improve my own relationship with others, the health recovery remains a part of my concern. If one cannot even meet with another devotee due to ill health, then immediately there is a great limitation. I am aware that many devotees are suffering unhappiness, some may even

be suffering physically, and I should avoid a too self-centered attitude about my own incapacities. When one Godbrother asked me how I was doing, I replied, "I shouldn't really be here" (meaning I should not have even attended these meetings for health reasons). He smiled and replied, "None of us should be here." In other words, we all should have acted in a more intelligent way since Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance and not have come to this point of a world crisis in ISKCON which has drawn us all to New Vrindaban.

None of us should be here, so why am I particularly complaining that I should not be here? There is the suffering of the wronged Godbrother, there is the suffering of the over-criticized, sincerely-working G.B.C. leader, and there is also the suffering of the physically ill who feels guilty that he cannot participate more and yet seeks the sympathy of Godbrothers who are themselves deeply involved in disturbances traced as due to the ISKCON system and its mismanagement.

What more could I do if I were well? Probably not much. I would be able to more fully attend the meetings, but in my silent way. At least it might appear more that I was paying my dues, experiencing every inch of the ordeal of trying to debate and sensitively discuss with disturbed Godbrothers their grievances, and to work together to make resolutions of rectification. My *karma* is to pay out my dues to a difficulty which is more intense on the one hand than those experienced by the healthy, and which on the other hand exempts me from the full responsibility of committee deliberation and long, personal discussions.

I cannot pretend to be an historian making a comprehensive picture of this time, neither was that my intention. In the future my notes may be seen as an example of one struggling through the situation with a particular human viewpoint, limitation, and handicap. Limitation is also due to psychological tendency.

My disciple Dāmodara is keeping a diary for the purpose of sharing with his Godbrothers experiences of their spiritual master. Dāmodara's diary relates how he is trying to cook for his spiritual master and the various domestic adventures involved

in that service. Yesterday, Dāmodara caught a snake in the basement. He was also a central figure in a drama involving the breakdown of a car and he tells how he is busily running back and forth trying to take care of many duties as a servant. He also presents a picture of his spiritual master trying to attend the ISKCON meetings despite illness. Dāmodara is personally involved in assisting the spiritual master in his Deity worship of Jagannātha deities, and in many steps of his physical therapy, such as enema, sunbathing, spinal bath, and in the dealings with Dr. Sarma.

But in Dāmodara's diary, there is mostly nothing about the real drama of the ISKCON world meeting wherein the God-brothers are expressing their dissatisfaction. So one could say Dāmodara's diary has completely missed the point and therefore has no historic, spiritual, or literary value. On the other hand, there is really no fault on Dāmodara's part for this. His approach is honest. Nor is it particularly shallow. He's minding his own business and serving his spiritual master steadfastly without being distracted by challenges which are made to his spiritual master's position. If one studies in an appreciative way what Dāmodara has written, it has its own inspiration for devotees in ISKCON, especially the followers of Dāmodara's spiritual master.

Who really grasps the meaning of a particular time? Is it the political activist, or the secluded thinker? There is no simple answer. Especially at times of great social upheaval, everyone is pressured to make a contribution to a welfare beyond their own life. And how they answer that call of pressure is also an individual thing. During the war most young men have to go to the battlefield, and if they did not do so, there would be no war. But the conscientious objector sometimes makes his own important contribution by refusing to fight. No one is exempt from making a response to the upheaval of events, but the responses may be made in their own way.

If I am not a central mover due to illness, as well as my retired tendency, that does not mean I should deride those who are actually the movers. I should not claim my role is more important.

But neither can I assume the role of another.

In the context of our present ISKCON crisis, some of our leading thinkers have thus seen that our difficulties are due to our not having a proper social system. They say the social system we should adopt is *varṇāśrama-dharma*, wherein each person will work more correctly, according to his tendency and quality, for the service of the whole. Some are trying to introduce this as the immediate remedy, and there will be discussions on this today. But disturbances are so great that it seems we need to “do the needful” immediately in terms of rectification, even without implementing at once all phases of *varṇāśrama*.

SOME MAIN POINTS OF JAYAPATĀKA SWAMI’S ESSAY, “ISKCON BIO-RHYTHMS”

Jayapatāka Swami gives evidence that the problems now facing ISKCON all originated from the G.B.C.’s taking counsel of one of Prabhupāda’s Godbrothers in the months immediately following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance and he presents various evidence to that effect.

SOME MAIN POINTS OF PAÑCADRAVIḌA SWAMI’S ESSAY, “ESTABLISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ŚIKṢĀ-GURU IN ISKCON”

Pañcadraviḍa Swami suggests that senior Prabhupāda disciples be recognized as *śikṣā-gurus*. He says that we should not give exclusive emphasis to the *dīkṣā-guru*, and that the worship of *dīkṣā-gurus* in ISKCON should be more modest.

September 20

FIFTH DAY OF MEETINGS AT NEW VRINDABAN, MISCELLANEOUS

A low point: In the open meeting, during his speech, a Godbrother compared himself to Arjuna, cast a baleful look at the assembled G.B.C. members, and said that it was his duty to fight them.

A right to differ: When Bhaktipāda was asked why he had a different opinion than the G.B.C. He said he had a right to his

opinion, as long as he did not obstruct the carrying out of the G.B.C. order. He cited a Prabhupāda letter. Prabhupāda was responding to Atreya Ṛṣi who had complained to Prabhupāda that devotees sometimes argued and that seemed to be a sign of impersonalism. Prabhupāda replied that he was being impersonal and that he should not expect everyone to agree. Even in the spiritual world they don't agree.

Typical exposure: The few times I spoke up at the G.B.C. meetings, I kept thinking how bright I was. In this I am essentially no different than an eight-year-old *gurukula* boy.

A critical mood: A Godbrother approached me in the meeting hall and said that he read my Vyāsa-pūjā homage and that he strongly objected to my stating that ISKCON has enemies. I tried replying, but he pointed out that Prahlāda Mahārāja severely condemns the attitude of friends and enemies. I thought of some counter-arguments but remained silent. If I see him again, I'm going to ask, "Was there anything in the homage that you liked?"

A pleasant break: Leaving the meeting room for some fresh air, I walked alongside the gorgeous Kāliya pond, with its fountain shooting water high in the air, black and white swans swimming, and also a few devotees diving and sporting. Along the path I met Nṛsimhānanda dāsa, who stopped me and gave me the latest fliers about ISKCON ITV. He said there are two new films on the life of Lord Caitanya which are very wonderful. I thanked him and took the fliers. Controversies continue, and Nṛsimhānanda dāsa goes on selling his Kṛṣṇa conscious films.

An expression of difference: The Godbrothers feel resentment that they've been heavied out over the years by the top leaders and not given freedom for their service. And the leaders feel affronted that they are being suspected of material motives despite their dedicated service.

A near-unanimous agreement: The excellence of the New Vrindaban ice cream.

Voices: "You *can't* be complacent. You have to do *something*."

"But does this group represent the devotees' feelings?"

"We just want the G.B.C. to do their work."

"Are the politics really transcendental?"

"The hurts are so deep they aren't healed by gathering at *maṅgala-āraṭi kīrtana*."

"We are keeping a file on their misbehavior."

"I've had enough of meetings. My brain is fried. I want to go back to my normal service."

Return Trip

With car parked in Amish country
Prabhupāda is singing *Brahmā-saṁhītā*
& we're eating juicy melons
amidst the dry brown cornstalks
while the melon-colored sun sets.
Do I want to hold this moment?
Do I know how to let it go?
His Divine Grace
is our only hope.

September 21

Devotees stop at Gītā-nāgarī on their way home from the world meeting. This morning Śrīla Harikeśa Mahārāja, Guru-Gaurāṅga, and Pañcaratna continued discussions of the conference themes. While Harikeśa Mahārāja was explaining to me how *varṇāśrama* management should work in ISKCON, I admitted to him that I could barely understand the concepts. I said that ISKCON management is becoming so sophisticated and demanding that I feel I can't keep up with it. I asked him what he thought my role was. "You are like a *ṛṣi*," he said. I should not leave the G.B.C., he said, but work in a more brahminical way. He said I could give people the most important thing, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and guide leaders when they become materialistic. In *varṇāśrama* everyone contributes according to their *karma* and *guṇa*.

Guru-Gaurāṅga said they have no such beautiful autumn days in Europe. There summer turns into a wet winter. Here for more than a week it has been sunny, warm, and dry. Leaves crunch underfoot, acorns pop, and dried cherries lie on the

ground. The goldenrod are past their prime, browning. It is a yellow, brown, and green autumn painting, Kṛṣṇa's picture.

It is His country, and we are not forgetful of Him. As we walk in His woods, we do not think this place is our permanent home. We are chanting the holy name. Come, skeptic, walk with us deeper in the woods, see the peeling sycamores like pure sages divested of their bark garments. Breathe fresh air, be peaceful, think over your life of service to Kṛṣṇa, and be thankful to the earth.

RĀDHĀṢṬAMĪ AT GĪTĀ-NĀGARĪ

Nineteen years ago on this day I received first initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda. This morning I gave the *Bhāgavatam* class and spoke on the *Brahmā-saṁhitā*: *premāñjana-cchuritta-bhakti-vilocanena*. Kṛṣṇa can be seen in the heart of one whose eyes are anointed with love for Him. I repeated the few simple things I first heard from Śrīla Prabhupāda about Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī—that She is the best devotee because She loves Kṛṣṇa better than others; She is kind; She is the mother of *bhakti*; the spiritual master is Her representative. Every year I will be saying these same few things about Rādhā. If I like, I may say many more things, quote from *Prema-vivarta* and *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛta*. (After class today a devotee offered me a collection of fifty sastric verses about Rādhārāṇī.) But those few things Śrīla Prabhupāda said in 1966 will always be most important for me; they are *vijñāna*, realized knowledge, because I heard them innocently and faithfully from Her pure devotee.

September 22

Today I sent a letter to my disciples in the temples requesting them to accept the changes in *guru* worship, no exclusive *vyāsāsana*, no *guru-pūjā arati*, etc. I really don't anticipate that they will have trouble accepting these, since their duty is to follow my instruction. I don't think there is any change in my relationship with my disciples, even though there is some reduction in the ceremonies. This zone is one of the first to make these moves, so we shall see how our devotees set an example.

I'm looking to bring Kṛṣṇa into my existence in writing, but

it's like the awkward *deus ex machina* when God enters a stage play. It's the stage play itself (my life) that is awkward and artificial, not Kṛṣṇa's immanence. He is all-pervading, but I am so far from spontaneous perception of His glories that my mention of Him is awkward. O you of little faith.

My ready perception is of the earth: of the blue jays recently heard and seen here, whose queedle-queedle sounds like a rusty pulley on a clothesline; the blue jays who have taken over the forest this week, crying out jay warnings and flying more horizontally than upwards; and the mild weather that fills me with well-being.

The birds are right before me, but unfortunately, my wishes to improve *japa* and reading are like far-off dreams, wishes of one who repeatedly daydreams of something he's incapable of doing. "Oh, maybe one day."

September 23

I am supposed to be quite free of the headaches after two more months, according to Dr. Sarma. In the next sixty days he has prescribed a total of twenty-four days of fasting. During fasts, the doctor says I should concentrate on religious activities, solitary *bhajana*, *japa*, hearing, and I should avoid stress. That way the ether cure (fasting) will have better opportunity to repair the body.

I complained that Kṛṣṇa came in as a *deus ex machina* in my life and thought and writing. Too often Kṛṣṇa occurs as an afterthought, a rubber-stamping by which I try to make a mundane thought transcendental. One of the best ways to correct this and enter more directly and completely into Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to give receptive hearing to His words and teachings in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

With this in mind, I took my turn this morning and gave the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture in the temple. The taste of this is beyond body, beyond the mind, beyond the speculative intelligence. To speak and hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* sincerely is to enter the spiritual realm.

I gave a class on the prayers of Dhruva Mahārāja. The verses stated that Dhruva gained his realization and ability to pray

about the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead only because it was given to him by Kṛṣṇa through Kṛṣṇa's internal energy. So there was a great transformation in Dhruva. I tried to encourage the devotees (including myself) that we also can be transformed into more ecstatic, realized devotees by hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We can study the prayers of Dhruva Mahārāja and other great *bhaktas*. When we make our own prayer, that should be guided by authorized knowledge of Kṛṣṇa which we receive by hearing the prayers of great *mahājanas*. For example, how do we know how to pray without material desire, except we have been guided by prayers such as Lord Caitanya's *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, wherein He says, "I don't pray for wealth, women, or followers, but only for Your causeless devotional service life after life."

A devotee lives by the scriptural rules and rejoices in them. A real devotee cherishes whatever moments he can spend with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and after he hears, he tells others. And he remembers Kṛṣṇa always. Today's verse and purport declared that a person who forgets Kṛṣṇa is no better than someone asleep.

Faith in Bhakti

If an investigating committee
uncovers diaries and poems,
I may be warned,
"Why is your heart impure,
why do you have bad dreams,
why don't you better manage money and men?"

I'll confess I don't love
when I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa,
& I can't pay attention while reading.
Maybe never in this lifetime
will my *anarthas* be removed.

"Why write this down?
Will disciples lose faith?"
They won't, I say.

They see him through me.
 So great and pure is *bhakti*,
 tho' my faults be admitted,
 Prabhupāda will save us.

September 25

Listening to Prabhupāda's examples:

There is a person behind the mechanics of the red and green traffic lights; the lights don't work automatically. And there is God behind everything.

In the Tata factory, Tata is in control everywhere, but we cannot expect to find him personally working there. So Kṛṣṇa says everything is relying on Him, but He is not there; He is in Goloka Vṛndāvana.

I accept these as facts. The examples are solid and true. The skeptics want more sophisticated and "scientific" arguments, and we also have devotee-scholars who can present it that way to those who demand it. Ultimately, however, I accept the philosophy not just because of its logical soundness, but because of *hearing from authority, śabda-brahma*. The bona fide *guru* and Kṛṣṇa Himself must reveal to us transcendental knowledge and transcendental life.

How long it has been since I have explained this to new listeners! No wonder I am grateful to the doctor for giving me the basics of hygienic care. Soon I can return to philosophic preaching, with strength for reaching out, strength for travel, tolerance, meeting opposition.

NOTES FROM A LECTURE

Almost everyone, no matter how great he may be, thinks of himself as the body. But we are actually the soul within the body. We become attached to our body, but Kṛṣṇa says it is not a very important thing. It is like garbage. Even those who know this may also show attachment, such as pain when the body is disturbed. But at least they should know, "I am not this body." For example, if you own a Rolls Royce car, it is natural that you may be attached to it since you are paying for it. But despite the attachment you should never think, "I am this car."

Health is important, but bodily well-being is not identical to

spiritual well-being. Health is very important, but the spirit-self is even beyond that, and is in fact never affected by bodily pains and pleasures. Even hygiene experts fail to understand the actual position of the soul. It has to be learned by directly accepting Kṛṣṇa's words in *Bhagavad-gītā*.

September 26, Appearance day of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

This morning I rose early and while starting to write I got an idea. I decided to move to the temple at Potomac, Maryland, in order to help encourage the devotees to develop the project. Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla's proposal that the Potomac property be sold is partly based on sound reasoning, since the project is dispirited in many ways. But this challenge has moved me to go and protect the property rather than allow them to sell it. I've had to consider many different things, such as my health, where I would live at Potomac, whether the doctor will come with us, and whether I can actually endure it. But I think it's right. So I've written a letter to our Zonal Committee, asking for their blessings in my attempt.

At present, Potomac ISKCON is not a very inviting place for a manager, just some acres with mostly shanties and a bunch of dispirited devotees. Managers sometimes call working at a project like this "babysitting." But my intention is to go as a preacher, and in that sense there is a wonderful field. There are many Indians, many Americans, many devotees, and the dream of a project to be built there—a Vedic temple, guest-house, and householder facility, which will take years of success before realizing.

Neither have I failed to consider that a main service is writing. That also can go on perhaps in an inspired preaching role. I may give up the special sweetness of Gītā-nāgarī nature walks and healthful privacy, but I may get in exchange something even more valuable, a better contribution by me to the movement.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA IN OCTOBER 1975,
MAURITIUS MORNING WALK

Prabhupāda was answering questions from a boy who spoke with a heavy French accent. The boy asked about the Bible, about creation, about how to know what food the human can

eat, about how to know when the order of Kṛṣṇa is present. He had not previously read or inquired much. Prabhupāda answered him strongly, carefully, authoritatively, while they walked past people who were catching crabs. You could hear Prabhupāda's cane tapping on the hard sand. At the beginning of the walk Prabhupāda spoke about the sand and the sea in scientific terms, asking for some response, but the men on the walk didn't know much and couldn't reply to the statement that the beach is made of sodium silicates and that there is iodine in the sea.

Following Prabhupāda's example, we have to speak on the basis of *śāstra*. Otherwise, we are like the frog in the three-foot well. Prabhupāda was always convinced in the superior knowledge of the eternal Vedic literature. We have to also be convinced, deeply immersed in *brahma-jñāna* and the *bhakti* knowledge, especially as found in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And we have to possess the divine spark, the desire to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. On this same morning walk a devotee asked Prabhupāda why no one else preached Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the years of Kali-yuga before Prabhupāda came. At first, Prabhupāda replied that it was not correct to say that no one preached. Lord Caitanya preached and so did His descendants. But Prabhupāda admitted that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not spread until he came.

Harikeśa Swami then ventured, "They were saving it for you."

Prabhupāda replied, "For you also."

Preaching is saved for us, it is our duty in this short human life. But we are so relieved that we have been pulled into the boat of transcendental knowledge that we sometimes feel exhausted or complacent and do not get up and do the further, most important work of rescuing others. Or are we afraid that if we try to rescue we may fall back into the material ocean again? Whatever the lack is, a preacher has to overcome it. He has to have full faith in *śāstra* (the faith of a child, the faith of a great warrior), and he has to be empowered. We followers of Prabhupāda are all empowered, and we are recipients of the supreme

knowledge. What is holding us back? How long will I go on with excuses not to preach?

I spoke on the phone with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and I am more convinced than ever that we should not abandon the Potomac property. The Deities cannot be moved. Others who want to develop dynamic city preaching in D.C. should go full ahead, but not at the expense of the Deities and our suburban project, depressed as it is at present. Śrīla Prabhupāda came there and approved it, and the Vaiṣṇavas want it; so be it. I plan to go there, if Kṛṣṇa desires, within a few days. It will be a new life for me, a definite challenge whether a *guru* and his disciples can do something potent. Our critics say we are sentimental. They will challenge us further and there will be many tests.

Rain pouring all night, still pouring. Now I am preparing to leave. The trip to New Vrindaban was a short one, and I prepared myself for it long in advance. But the move to Potomac is sudden and not a short visit, but a move for long-term service.

When your attachment for Kṛṣṇa is stronger than temporary affection, then you have achieved detachment. While performing immediate service, you must never forget the holy name, and you must be always aware of the approaching time of death, ready to give up all designations of this world. To make a full effort toward becoming a pure devotee, we cannot perform duties mechanically, but always with awareness of our deeper purpose, attaining love of Kṛṣṇa.

Why should I feel pinched in any way when someone strongly emphasizes that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *śikṣā-guru* for all devotees and that he should be glorified by the present and future spiritual masters in ISKCON, and that *gurus* should direct their disciples unto him? Am I diminished by praise of Śrīla Prabhupāda? Does my preaching become less effective if everyone accepts that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the teacher and I am his follower? Will my disciples not regard me as a bona fide *guru*

if they know that I merely repeat what Śrīla Prabhupāda says and depend on him for my knowledge of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa? No, no loss comes from emphasizing him. Any pinching felt is an unwillingness to fully surrender and admit, "I am lower than a blade of grass, I do not deserve honor. He has saved me from the pit where stool is dropped." Miserly heart, please expand yourself and recognize the spiritual master of the three worlds. Your glory is to praise him and thus please the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Going through my daily routine. If I stop to reflect, I feel the mixed emotions of leaving Gītā-nāgarī. Looking out at the cold, wet leaves scattered on the ground. I remember during the summer how I was sick and there wasn't much hope. I am certainly glad *that* is behind. But the feeling of retirement, knowing that I didn't have to go anywhere, didn't have to face burdens and therefore I could be quiet and alone and commune with Kṛṣṇa through nature — that period of my life I leave with some regret.

I am still young enough, good years of health are ahead of me, and I am meant to be fighting in the *saṅkīrtana* army.

It's odd the way I am departing. Although I have two more months of intense recuperation, I am appearing on the field of duty.

Separation from Prabhupāda

Walking with the doctor in chill air,
 he asks, "What was your most interesting
 experience with Prabhupāda?"
 I cannot choose one moment.
*What about the time we went together
 within the inner sanctum at Tirupati?*
My massaging him on the Bombay porch...
why did I leave as his personal servant?
 "Each one is indescribable?" he asks.
 I referred him to a book I wrote,
 and I was about to say,
 "We are serving him in separation."

I was about to tell him

of the absence of Prabhupāda.
Now we fight more, can't resolve as easily.
 I was about to tell him of the guru's order—
nothing is apart from it—
it's your whole life,
 but the doctor spoke of something else,
 and my separation from Prabhupāda submerged
 as we walked in the chill air
 and now I am waiting
 for another opportunity to speak.

September 28

Especially at Gītā-nāgarī it makes no difference that there is no *guru-pūjā* or picture on the altar. Instead of *pūjā*, we all walk, disciples and some Godbrothers and Godsisters, down the farm road talking together and enjoying the clear Gītā-nāgarī atmosphere. I asked how long the marigolds will stay. "A frost could come any night now," said Amogha, "but there are plastic coverings." We went and looked at the boys' little zoo, the Japanese silky chickens, two peacocks, parakeets, and a hutch full of rabbits. Siddha-bābā told about the squirrel they have tamed and the one that bit him. And he told about a raccoon that approached them and how they found out the next day it had rabies and a hawk swept down to attack it. I told about seeing the great blue heron and Śrī Kṛṣṇa said he saw it early one morning flying by moonlight over the creek. I asked Sureśvara when the next "Farm Newsletter" is coming out and we discussed possible articles. One news item is that one hundred county farm agents on a U.S. tour will visit our farm in a few days.

All of this is personal relationship, a kind of *guru-pūjā*, or association of devotees, or farm-*kathā*—call it what you like, it is our exchange—I don't like to leave and they don't like to see me go.

Indradyumna Swami is here to receive treatment from Dr. Sarma. We had a lively talk, sharing our experiences of being physically ill while trying to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For over a year he has suffered from loss of his voice, and was sometimes not able to speak at all. He also told me of the time when

his kidney stones moved into the urinary tract and gave him violent pain. He was rushed from the temple to a hospital. He said he was able to think of Kṛṣṇa and say His name even during the kidney stone pain, which he said is mentioned in the *Vedas* as being equal to the pain of death. He said the experience has given him conviction that when the pain of death comes he should not be afraid that he will be unable to say Kṛṣṇa's name. He also said that after spending months in a sanatorium near people who were dying, he gained a permanent impression that life is temporary and that everyone of us will have to die sooner or later. This impression of the absolute fact of death has made him more detached.

We shared feelings of frustration at not being able to perform active service. During my own illness I have thought of him and he said he has thought of me. This has given me some solace. I was able to think, "Even a strong, active, sincere devotee like Indradyumna Swami gets sick."

I expressed to Indradyumna Mahārāja my conviction that even a temporary gain of a few years of active service to Śrīla Prabhupāda should be considered by us as a great thing to strive for. We should take to the cure treatments and hygienic principles for this purpose. We know that ultimately health depends on Kṛṣṇa, but we should seriously follow any process that will enable us to get well for service. I contrasted an ISKCON devotee to a *bābāji* who does not have active service of preaching but has the goal of merging his being into thought of Kṛṣṇa. The *bābāji* chants in a secluded place and awaits the time of death. Yet beyond this is the task of bringing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others, and for that we are striving for health, to travel and preach.

September 29

My secretary casts a threatening look: he has something heavy to say. Usually it's not as bad or fearful as I suspect. Even if it is a surprise, a shock—a new legal implication, a threat of loss of money or property—when I consider it in the light of the *Bhāgavatam* philosophy, it is not so fearful. But I keep thinking

he will come in with his pad and pen and say something like, “Russian missiles are flying toward the U.S. and will land in half an hour.” But no matter how bad it gets, there will be time to utter the holy name in helplessness. All orderly activities may be disrupted—book writing and publishing, temple residence, peaceful prosecution of religious and hygienic life, comfortable eating, regular sleep, association of devotee friends, honor, protection, privacy—nothing is guaranteed. But Kṛṣṇa will not desert us. If we think of Him we can go to Him. And as long as we have life and breath, some kind of preaching can be done, helping others to hear the liberating message.

DIARY NOTES

The Gītā-nāgarī project is well-established. Tomorrow I go to join the Potomac project, which has dwindled. From Rādhā-Dāmodara to Rādhā-Madana-mohana. Rādhā-Dāmodara have allowed me to share in Their wealth, Their land of the cows, a peaceful site where I could lie down in illness and meditate on Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. In my relationship with Rādhā-Madana-mohana, I think I am being asked to render Them tangible service and to make up for offenses in Their service, which I have been indirectly responsible for. Their temple is in my zonal jurisdiction, and although I have tried over the years to find a right managerial combination, one leader after another comes and goes. Now I throw myself into the breach. If we are to do something wonderful, it will take long dedication.

In my arguments against those who would sell the Potomac property, I stressed that a Deity, once installed, cannot be moved from the temple. I have invoked the presence of God and claimed that I am on His side, protecting Him against the rude movers. Those who oppose might well argue, “You are somewhat hypocritical to speak of protecting the Deity. Why all these years have you allowed the Deity worship and temple to dwindle?” My response is to take the blame on my head, along with my disciples, and to make up to Rādhā-Madana-mohana and to Sītā-Rāma and to Gaura-Nitāi by personally residing in the *dhāma* and working to make a successful temple community.

I am going there because things have reached a crisis. I cannot help them simply by staying at Gītā-nāgarī and writing. My walks in the Gītā-nāgarī woods would become irresponsible. Prabhupāda's dictum, "Do the needful," is pushing me out.

4

October 1

Today I found a walking path on these 16 acres with taller trees than at Gītā-nāgarī. It is a lone walk, but soon when all the leaves are gone, it will be close to large Potomac houses, and they may see me passing closely in my saffron. I thought it could be a place to chant *japa* and think awhile, "How can I get on the track of better Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

October 2, 3:00 A.M.

In a dream, I ate some food without first offering prayers to Kṛṣṇa. My mother and father were present and heavily condemned me for this. I tried to be contrite, but was also rebellious when they got so heavy about it. I told them they also did many things that were not spiritual. Glancing at my mother, I said one could be materialistic even while claiming to be religious. My father defended my mother and a family row ensued.

I felt grateful even while dreaming that I have been enrolled by Śrīla Prabhupāda's grace in a religious system which is a scientific process and is based on solid books of knowledge. Kṛṣṇa consciousness has also been personally demonstrated to me in the example of my spiritual master. To offer every bit of food one eats unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead and to take only His remnants as *prasādam* is taught in a fully developed way only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

It was ironic to hear my parents berate me for failure to follow this, since in our actual family life as Catholics, they never taught me this, nor does it exist. Therefore I am grateful to be aware of Kṛṣṇa consciousness which gives us complete protection and opportunity to stay under the shelter of Kṛṣṇa by following rules and regulations. As Kṛṣṇa states in the *Bhagavad-gītā*,

*yajña-śiṣṭāsinaḥ santo
mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ*

*buñjate te tv aghaṁ pāpā
ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt*

The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin.

—Bg. 3.13

However, it is not enough to follow the rules and regulations in a merely mechanical way. Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the dual fault of *niyamāgraha*—either abandoning rules entirely or obeying them only in a ritualistic way with personal motivation and without actually pleasing Kṛṣṇa. In my dream, I was guilty of abandoning a rule and regulation, as I acted with an uncontrolled tongue. But feeling somewhat righteous about being enrolled in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and defending myself before my parents, I scolded them for taking a “holier than thou” attitude. A genuine spiritualist has to be free of so many gross and subtle traps of *māyā*!

Another question from the dream is, “What is the benefit of feeling contrite for unwanted habits?” The current spirit in the material world is to be “free” and hedonistic. One is encouraged to engage in the lower animal nature, even to the point of sexual perversion, and to not feel guilty about it. Guilt, for many, is considered a “hang-up,” as is the whole religious mentality. These are some of the bad and slow symptoms of people in this age of Kali.

We should be sorry for sins. But we have to be convinced in a philosophical way that such a thing as sin actually exists. If we don’t know the basis of the eternal soul and his subservience to the Supreme Soul, then guilt or sin may seem to us imaginary concoctions by dogmatic priests and their naive believers. But there is sin, wrong-doing, for which we have to face the karmic reaction. And the greatest sin is to forget Kṛṣṇa in one way or another, as I did by failing to offer my bread to Him.

It is not unusual for one who is making a serious step on the path of God consciousness to focus on his own specific failings and to berate himself about it. But how does this improve things? The contrition has to be more than a petty chastisement

which goes on in a nagging way for years without betterment. One has to plunge into active and daring service as given by the spiritual master in order to really cleanse oneself of all bad and slow habits. We may always lament our lack of pure selfless love for Kṛṣṇa, and we may always be able to detect some faults. That is humility, “lower than a blade of grass.” When we weep because we do not love Kṛṣṇa, we reach an exalted form of spiritual consciousness. But for the lamentation to be actually exalted and not just petty criticism, we have to advance through an all-out effort to engage our body, mind, and self in the service of the Lord. We have to make real acts of sacrifice and surrender in order to conquer our big obvious faults, and not just timidly berate ourselves for minor infractions.

As for my dream, it is also mixed up by my relationship with my mother and father. I have not seen them in years, and yet we come together in a quarreling dream. But I have been through all that already. They did not want me to be a devotee in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they could not understand it, and they took such objection to it that they rejected me. This has been a kind of blessing in disguise, but I cannot be falsely proud of it. They see me as a bad, ungrateful son, and most people of this world would sympathize with them. My recourse is a verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where it is stated that all real debts incurred in this world—debts to parents, to sages, to civilization, to the demigods—are absolved for one who entirely devotes himself to service unto Mukunda.

In its different aspects this dream points me to a deeper commitment and appreciation for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is full opportunity to surrender within the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, here and now, and I am praying to be able to perform better. There are no other obligations, and before this one all-comprehensive task, I am still hesitant. I am aware of this failing, and trying to realistically deal with my imperfections by placing myself in the purifying fire of devotional activity.

In today’s *Bhāgavatam* purport (*Bhāg.* 3.23.52), Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “The spiritual master cannot accept service from a disciple without awarding him spiritual instruction. That is the

reciprocation of love and duty." And this spiritual instruction is eternal; it does not end with the body, as do material comforts.

So how does the *guru* do it? How can *I* do it? It is not on one's own strength. It is done by repeating the *paramparā* as one has heard from his spiritual master. It is done on the strength of Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas*.

One qualifies to carry this message by following it. In ISKCON now, many Godbrothers are stepping forward and taking disciples. Yes, and so the disciple has to be qualified to know what is *guru*. He has to approach one who is self-realized. If, for example, you want to purchase gold but you know nothing about it, then you may easily be cheated. So one should know the qualification for the *guru* but then be satisfied to receive the instructions from the right person.

In the verse today, Devahūti asked her husband to give her a son so she could get spiritual instruction. That was the husband's duty. Once you pick a husband and once you surrender to a *guru* you cannot reject his order if later you do not like it. You cannot say, "I will pick another *guru*." Because how will you surrender? Even if you picked Rūpa Gosvāmī or Kṛṣṇa Himself, how will you be the disciple unless you personally hear from him and serve his particular instructions here and now? Therefore there is need of *guru* even today, even after the appearance and disappearance of the greatest spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Now *gurus* have to qualify by being the followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Is it voluntary? Yes, because we have free will. But the *śāstra* states that if you want to fulfill the actual purpose of human life, then it *must* be done.

Unless you surrender, then you are not a disciple. You must accept a *guru* and you must do what he says. If he does not call you for lunch you do not go and demand your food. This is the *gurukula* system. No matter if one is the son of a prince, he has to serve as the menial servant of a *guru*.

And what is this submission for? It is for training the disciple how to be detached from material sense gratification. The *guru* teaches him the art of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. By that ser-

vice the disciple qualifies to go to the spiritual world. And while in this world the disciple assists the mission of the spiritual master. The disciple has received knowledge and so he has to distribute it to others. That is called *guru-dakṣiṇā*, the debt owed to the spiritual master.

If either the *guru* or the disciple is a cheater, the relationship is ruined. When one is fortunate to meet a bona fide spiritual master, however, he cannot be doubtful toward him, thinking maybe he is a cheater. If a disciple thinks that, then how can he serve with heart and soul? And unless he serves heart and soul, how can he approach Kṛṣṇa? So it is important that one accept as spiritual master one who is an actual link with Kṛṣṇa.

In another purport (*Bhāg.* 5.5.18), Śrīla Prabhupāda describes how a spiritual master or husband may be rejected if he cannot deliver his dependents from death:

Ordinarily the spiritual master, husband, father, mother or superior relative accepts worship from an inferior relative, but here Rṣabhadeva forbids this. First the father, spiritual master or husband must be able to release the dependent from repeated birth and death. If he cannot do this, he plunges himself into the ocean of reproachment for his unlawful activities. Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as the spiritual master takes charge of his disciple or a father takes charge of his son. All these responsibilities cannot be discharged honestly unless one can save the dependent from repeated birth and death.

BIRDS OF POTOMAC

There are some chirpy songbirds here, but I don't know their names. And big steel birds pass regularly overhead; 747, DC 10. They have their own beauty: at night like a shade of twilight, lights blinking, the incoming descending plane seems to be moving slowly; and in mid-day sunlight, they are glittering silver with the name of the airlines barely visible; and the scrape-sound of the jet against the sky, the rumble of jet power, the thought of jet gasoline waste are something you can get to live with. The jets are massively powerful and yet they are tiny specks; they are graceful yet ugly, depending on how you see it;

and although they are obviously man-made, ultimately they are made by Kṛṣṇa.

The planes fly every minute over Potomac ISKCON, a dispirited place, yet a hopeful, worshipful place where I should dedicate myself and try to rally the devotees. "Let's prove to Prabhupāda and his followers that the almost-impossible can be achieved through *bhakti*! Let's turn this place into a success."

Lying in the cold spinal bath, I listened to *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, "Preaching to America." He asked his *sannyāsīs* to go out and preach on how to solve crime. I keep in touch with him by hearing this, how he preached from Chicago to Philadelphia. Prabhupāda—leader of hundreds of thousands of young men and women, flying quickly to thirteen cities in North America, facing controversies with loyal loving followers, his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement rising. It is still so, but the movement is struggling also, and he is not the sole live presence, although he remains the deciding factor to make everyone accept the G.B.C. as Prabhupāda's own authority. He is always with us, but we are also more on our own now. More reason than ever to stay close to his instructions and to associate with our Godbrothers.

From a purport: "Pure devotees are not only satisfied by knowing everything about the Lord, but they are also eager to broadcast the information to others, and they want to see that the glories of the Lord are known to everyone. Thus the devotee feels satisfied when such an opportunity is offered to him. This is the basic principle of missionary activities" (*Bhāg.* 2.5.9).

Anticipating a Meeting

Sitting indoors this gray day,
watching a photo of Prabhupāda
with his two-day beard (looks
like he's walking in Vṛndāvana)
I'm waiting for a meeting.

A Godbrother has charged me
for not being close to him.

He wants to be my friend.
Do I withhold it? No,
but what can I give?

Let's read *Bhāgavatam* together,
then I'll come alive.
Let's go out and preach together,
then I'll come alive.
But don't be disappointed, friend,
if I can't give you a certain post,
or if you don't get from me exactly what you want.
Be patient. It can't be forced.
Friendship-love comes gradually.

October 4

Today I spoke with the new devotees: "I want to help you grow up in spiritual life without calamities."

Whatever strength I have comes from my spiritual master. Nowadays we are recognizing more how Śrīla Prabhupāda is the one *ācārya* we are all depending on. I express it more openly, but my own role is not diminished. We need not be pretentious and try to insinuate that we are liberated, pure devotees. Admitting that we are depending on Śrīla Prabhupāda, there is full scope for work as a *guru*.

Reading poetry of the 1980s:

I was surprised to find the name of an old college friend, Steve Kowit, who has published a book of erotic poems. We have certainly gone different ways.

Looking through the 80s poetry, it is mostly all crazy, and sexual appetite is uncontrolled.

They have no idea about God for the simple reason they have never met a pure devotee. They avoided him, or they were unfortunate. We wander through species in the universe of *Brahmā* and only a few persons are fortunate to meet the *guru* who gives you Kṛṣṇa. I think I cannot reach these mad ones; they will not listen. They are too far gone into their minds and

egos, believing they can copulate as they like where they like with whomever they like, and they think there is no God. We keep broadcasting though.

They are averse to religionists and we don't blame them for that, but because they have been tricked by counterfeit money doesn't mean there is no real money. However, if one cannot listen submissively (if he waits to leap like an attacker at the words of the *guru*), then what can be done? We give them *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. We try to give them a book. Sometimes someone reads *Bhagavad-gītā* and becomes a little purified.

For them, to be "honest" is merely to make candid expressions and to experience animalism. We go on broadcasting; go on making arrangements for them to come home, and most important of all, we develop ourselves into genuine devotees of Kṛṣṇa, so when the hedonists collapse at our door or wander by, the Supersoul within may direct them: "These people are real. I don't have to continue being crazy and seeking happiness in this miserable body."

Even Śrīla Prabhupāda did not attract all of them. Lord Caitanya also said some of the students were very expert in avoiding His mercy. So what can we do? We go on. Some of the young ones, and some of the older ones, living in their own ways, already vegetarians, or who have come to the end of the road of selfish pursuits, some motley persons come. We cannot describe or analyze exactly the nature of a likely candidate; we just go on trying to find one pure devotee. One moon is worth thousands of stars, and he is worth all the efforts to maintain this mission.

Prayer for Better Japa

My sixteen rounds
must be done,
my daily quota,
before I rest at night.

The chanting carries me
beyond the illusions

of Steve Kowit's erotica,
and from a grinding *karmī*'s workday
and from death in my bones.

Śrīla Prabhupāda started me off
by chanting the first round
on these red wooden beads
and he chanted so pure and strong
the momentum continues
tho' the beads wear down.

As butter comes from milk that's churned,
& as a rubbed match bursts into flames,
I hope by practice to reach spontaneous love.

Rejoice and proclaim the greatness
of our spiritual master
who kindly gave us
the right to utter the names of God!

"Chant sixteen rounds," he said,
"and what are the four rules?"
*No illicit sex, no intoxication,
no meat-eating and no gambling.*

And we are rolling on
in the protection of that order,
blessed by his initial push
and we will easily make it Home
as long as we follow.
Even our mistakes will be overcome.

Please, energy of Lord,
O Lord,
forgive my mounting offenses
to the merciful Names.
Please give me offenseless chanting;
engage me in Your service.

October 5, 3:00 A.M.

As I approached Lord Jagannātha's altar where They are sleeping, I turned on a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking. As I heard his voice I suddenly sensed his inconceivable greatness as a spiritual person. "Why don't I always sense this about Śrīla Prabhupāda?" I asked myself. Then I realized that this was my shortcoming even when Prabhupāda was present with us. I failed to properly see him as the Worshiper Supreme Personality of Godhead, and so now I may unconsciously tend to think, "Devotees are exaggerating the high standard and dominant role of Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Why did I fail when he was here? It may be due to the fact that I *did* see him as Kṛṣṇa's empowered agent and I was afraid he would force me to surrender all sense gratification. And it may be familiarity breeding contempt, the mistake of seeing the physical condition of the pure devotee and thinking he is material. I was almost always respectful, obedient, devoted, and reverent, but I failed to fully appreciate him. So my failure comes again now. But sometimes—and I hope it may increase—as when turning on the tape and suddenly realizing *who* is present, I see glimpses of Śrīla Prabhupāda far beyond what I usually see or hear.

It is not wrong that we say Prabhupāda is like Jesus Christ in our movement, the founder-*ācārya*. That is not blasphemy to Jesus but a favorable comparison. And neither does it diminish the spiritual masters who come after Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although for the Christians Christ is the son of God, yet they worship their dozens of great men and women saints, all followers of Jesus. Similarly, we have many praiseworthy disciples and even grand-disciples of our founder-*ācārya*, all followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana, I have come here to "defend" You from being moved away from Potomac. "The Deity cannot be moved," yet others want to move You back to the city. They say You were installed in a city temple and already moved once, so you should come back into the city. Who is right? Whose side do You take?

You are dressed in white silks, Govinda, and golden Rādhārāṇī glows beside You. You are our Govinda and drawing us to You by this competition.

Madana-mohana, it is not just a game for me. I'm planning to stay and develop here. Let them bring another Deity to the city, but they should leave You and us alone.

Śrī Śrī Sītā-Rāma are also here installed, and Gaura-Nitāi—how will others be able to find a place equal to these sixteen acres in the aristocratic suburbs for Your residence?

They say the city is the *bhāgavata-mārga* and this place is *pāñcarātrikī-mārga*, and that the *bhāgavata-mārga*, or preaching the *Bhāgavatam*, is more important. All I know is that I am on the side of keeping You here. You will finally do as You like. You know our plan and theirs. We want to build a temple here, although at present we can hardly pay our bills and Your worship is at a low standard.

I don't want to be dogmatic or seem to be uninterested in widespread preaching. I just think that the preaching should be arranged without selling this property and moving You. I suppose it is a game of sorts, and You are the Player. Do with me as You like, but I don't intend to give in. We can build both city and suburban preaching, but I don't think the plan to move You is wise.

We are trying to build a community for people who are serious about spiritual life. Should I ask householders to be satisfied with what they have? The rooms are simple. (In 1969, Prabhupāda looked into the householders' rooms in the Boston temple and said, "I saw some things are scattered," but he praised them, saying that although people [*karmīs*] would criticize the devotees for living in such a simple way, they [the *karmīs*] are in the darkness of craziness.)

I visited the apartments and one couple looked sad that they have a small two-room space. They have to share kitchen facilities and they want their own bathroom. But another man and his wife are satisfied to use an outhouse. It has to do with one's spiritual advancement.

We must see that the *grhasthas* are satisfied as far as possible.

No one is completely surrendered, so everyone has to be given a facility they can live with.

What is it all for? We are living together to chant and hear in the temple room. We want to build a congregation. It's also for reaching out to people who live in their own homes; we can go to them and teach them how to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

So the place is a hodgepodge of different buildings, and there are devotees who live outside who keep criticizing us. They say we should abandon the project and live in a different way. But we are going on in this way, as I have prayed to Rādhā-Madana-mohana. We cannot expect miracles overnight. But our morale has to improve. And that cannot be done just by words.

Plan: go to the temple program each day, be happy, in good health, develop love for the Deity, be willing to go out and preach and actually do it, everyone of us, have some contact with the nondevotees. And make a sumptuous feast on Sunday for the guests.

October 6

I think I am understanding better what Prabhupāda meant when he said, "A Vaiṣṇava neglects his health." He said that to a group of us in his room in Boston in 1969. Hari-nāma dāsa had entered the room and Prabhupāda asked how he was feeling. Hari-nāma told about some boils. Prabhupāda replied, "A Vaiṣṇava neglects his health." We laughed at the time, thinking that it was in some ways an instruction over our heads. Who could just neglect a painful situation? Especially when we had so much work to do for Prabhupāda and we needed to get well. What did it mean to neglect?

I think Prabhupāda meant that we should simply depend on Kṛṣṇa and not worry when the different bodily pains come and go. Lord Kṛṣṇa also says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya*: "Learn to tolerate the temporary pains and pleasures." A devotee is especially entitled to do this if he lives a pure life, eating pure foods and following pure habits, taking advantage of the natural effects of the air and sun and exercise. After he's done all he can to keep health, then if pain and distress

come, he can just be carefree about it. But if he lives artificially and then pain comes, he worries and tries to take to different patchwork remedies. Or if he neglects to take care, then he may fear a disaster. One who is actually fixed and surrendered in the sattvic life is in a better position to surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda describes in the *Kṛṣṇa* book how Vasudeva tried his best to protect his wife, but after that he remained peaceful and depended on Kṛṣṇa for the results: there is no fault in a dangerous situation if a person tries his best. Even if he fails, he will not fail to remember Kṛṣṇa and depend on Kṛṣṇa. Therefore the “neglect” of health which Prabhupāda described did not mean to indulge in all kinds of bad habits or to be uncaring about the body and make it unfit for Kṛṣṇa’s service. Rather, I think it means more that one should live a pure, natural life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and if still troubles come, accept it as one’s reaction for sinful life and simply abide in Kṛṣṇa.

Since my arrival here, it has been fairly easy. It all seems new. It will be more difficult to maintain over the months and realize advancement. Keep digging.

I spoke to the gathered devotees this morning in an *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī* setting. I told them I will be getting skinnier from fasting but they shouldn’t worry — why did I bother mentioning that? I also told them they should not criticize their *guru*. That was awkward, but maybe it was needed. And I told them I had come to make them surrender more.

Actually, my being here and taking on the challenge to keep and develop Potomac is a heavier fact than anything I could say about it today, since I’ve just moved in. Whatever I could say of my intentions might have seemed like another pep talk. The reality has to be proved. It’s a fact that many of them have unsundered habits and my coming is a personal challenge to them. They may like the idea that I am changing my life to come and live with them, but they may also find it painful when I actually attempt to push them to rise early and go to the temple program every day and to cooperate and work more. Therefore I sensed a quietness, a wait-and-see response to what I said.

Vijitātmā Prabhu said he thought the remedy was “more *yajña*.” He said when he joined the San Francisco temple everyone went out on *saṅkīrtana* and *hari-nāma* in the streets, including five-year-old Bhakta Viśvaretāḥ and thirty-five-year-old Jayānanda. He called for more cooperation between the downtown preaching center and the Potomac center for increasing *saṅkīrtana* participation for all devotees. He rightly analyzed the situation, and I promised more emphasis on *saṅkīrtana-yajña* for all.

A NOTE TO THE NONDEVOTEES

You have to realize you are covered over by ego. So when “you” talk it’s really illusion. You think you are Joe Jones or you think you are your mind, and especially you think you are your body. Tongue, belly, genitals dictate what you do as signaled by the mind. Your intelligence is covered over.

Real-you is not what you feel exactly, anymore than real you is the ephemeral character of yourself in a dream. To uncover takes a dedicated effort at self-realization. It takes hearing from one who is self-realized.

These goals are enunciated in the Vedic scriptures, but you cannot understand them unless you get guidance. There are realized souls, and there is absolute knowledge. You can go beyond this ephemeral up-and-down reporting on the body and ego.

One requirement is to be fed-up with your mundane self (beset by birth, death, disease, and old age) and to be convinced there is no happiness in this world. Then you have to seek out a pure devotee, inquire from him submissively, and render service unto him because he has seen the truth. Then you can begin to chant the *mahā-mantra* (with a little faith). But you’ll have to be ready to lose some friends (in exchange for better ones) and ready to give up addiction to sense gratification. Don’t care what others think.

It’s worth it to leave behind madness and repeated birth and death. Even a little effort will put you on the path to liberation where you will never suffer loss or diminution; even a little

effort will save you at the time of death.

ON SELFHOOD

Isn't it true that we all experience life through a self? Even if we are "selfless" with others, or if we are surrendered to the Supreme Self and merged in His interests, still that servanthood is a higher type of selfhood. The Vaiṣṇavas praise servants, they do not praise nonentities, nor does a nonentity exist. So to hear Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the viewpoint of another person is authentic transmission of knowledge. The *śāstras* are themselves compiled by persons, and they are about the Supreme Person. And they are intended for persons, whether liberated, trying to be liberated, or those persons who are interested only in material life.

The real point is not to avoid personhood but to purify it. "That feeling you have that *I am something*, is not wrong," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "but you have to realize who you are beyond the false ego." Who am I? I am the servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa. *Jīvera 'svarūpa' haya — kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa.'*

The on-going discovery and development of the self in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not a material pursuit. Thus I reassure myself about continuing the narrations of a small, struggling *jīva*. But the value of the chronicle will depend on how much Kṛṣṇa consciousness is evoked.

In the Park

In the park we met quite an old lady,
with white sneakers, scraping
a canvas with a paint knife.
Her picture was fall foliage.
It was chilly and as we walked
I didn't want to bother her,
besides, what do I know about art?

I thought of our ISKCON artists
who paint the spiritual world,
from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

And sometimes they paint within this world
 the form of a pure devotee
 like Prabhupāda with a garland
 and they paint Lord Caitanya in Bengal.

If a skeptic asked a spiritual artist,
 "Where do you see *Vaikuṇṭha*?"
 he could rightly reply, "I have not seen it
 but I heard it described,
 in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
 and with devotion I am trying
 to depict the personal form of God.
 If I do it rightly
 it will benefit the world
 more than any other art:
 they can worship what I paint."

From what I glanced in the park
 the old lady had a tree scene
 without the form of Kṛṣṇa.
 "This is the soul," she might say,
 "the soul of nature, the soul of the artist."
 But that art is mere reflection.
 Eternal soul is a person
 and the Supersoul is a beautiful Youth
 carrying four symbols in His hands.

I offer my obeisances
 to Kṛṣṇa conscious artists.

October 9

One of our main editors for *Back to Godhead* wants to take a sabbatical to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and to recover his spiritual strength. It looks like we will have to accept his decision, and so Śeṣa and I decided how to take up the burden of the departing man's work.

Sincere followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda have to do something

substantial to help this movement. Either we produce and distribute his magazine and books, or we keep his temples running, like faithful sons managing their father's estate. And according to our capacity, we should spread the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

And so I heard from the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*:

“Don't think,” he [Prabhupāda] said, “'Kṛṣṇa consciousness is my profession. I am getting a living, food, and shelter.' That is just what the Indians are doing. Not like that. It is *para-upakāra*. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not become a mechanical ritual. The real spiritual awareness for the Vaiṣṇava is when he feels the desire to save those who are in darkness.

Taking a sabbatical may be justified, as in the case of a warrior who has to retreat from the battlefield due to severe wounds. We may retreat in order to get strong by increased spiritual practices, and then we return to the fight. But the burdens don't take a vacation, and others have to take them up. Now in ISKCON there's more discussion of how each devotee should do the work that is best suited for him. Find that work which is your tendency and which is relevant to ISKCON, and then prosecute it heartily.

In my notebook I come upon a color photo of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma wearing white, and another photo—Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in black pants, capes, no shirts—Kṛṣṇa is all black, Balarāma's chest and arms are white, His club is silver and Kṛṣṇa's silver stick is wrapped in gold. And here's another photo—Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, Kṛṣṇa covered with *candana*, Rādhārāṇī and the *sakhīs* in red dresses.

As the Kārttika season approaches, I dream of being in Vṛndāvana: nearby monkeys, a sunlit, enclosed porch, a working typewriter, although when I'm actually there my American body and mind is often restless . . . but during these October days I occasionally daydream of being in Vṛndāvana in higher consciousness, getting resolve for a year's service back in the

West, increasing devotion to Prabhupāda on his disappearance day.

O Street Preaching Center, 8:45 P.M.

Old folks' home across the street, old lady out front leaning on metal support, two gay guys walk by talking loudly, one holding two drinks, cars fill all the parking spots—I'm finally back to a scene of preaching to nondevotees.

Girijādhava introduced me to the guests and I spoke on the verse about changing garments, changing bodies. On the altar was a small Deity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The audience was about fifty percent black, about fifty percent women, and about fifty percent nondevotees. Everyone had feasted on *prasādam* before I came.

I stressed the temporal nature of material life and human life's real purpose—to get the ultimate next life in the spiritual world.

The first question after the lecture came from a young man who has started hearing about Kṛṣṇa because his girlfriend is a regular visitor to the center: "Is charitableness a form of God consciousness which is the higher nature of humans distinguishing them from animals?" Yes, I said, but it has to be guided to the highest charity, helping others with spiritual knowledge.

Next question was from Sababu, a regular visitor with many strands of beads and a knit hat around his afro: "I heard a speaker say demigods desire to be born as humans. Please explain." I said they want to take part in Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana*.

The next question was a challenge from Jim, a gray-haired street person who sometimes quotes Lao Tzu and is usually skeptical: "What about our brothers and sisters who are less cognizant?" He mentioned buddhas who came back and who helped others to get salvation. He seemed to think we lacked this in our theology. I told him of Prahāda Mahārāja's prayer. We not only have the sentiment to help others, but we have the actual goods to deliver them in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Next question (Sababu again): "I heard that the *Vedas* say Buddha is God. I'm a student of comparative religion, and

Buddhism and Kṛṣṇa consciousness seem philosophically diametrically opposed. How come?" I explained that God or His servant teach differently according to time, persons, and place.

I felt the urge to actually bring those present in the room to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. More important than my own feeling, I repeated Śrīla Prabhupāda's message and thus presented before them the matchless gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It will save them at the time of death. They should take it up very seriously. They should not be allured by those who teach pursuit of temporary enjoyment. The *mahā-mantra* is most powerful. All that I shared with them is true and can deliver them.

Now I look out at a noisy city street, men and women talking, cars moving, and I'm supposed to rest. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for bringing me here and letting me speak a little. I know this is only the beginning.

October 10

Up all night with the sounds of the street. This morning I picked a Seventh Canto purport wherein Prabhupāda states that book distribution is more important than temple worship. The D.C. and Philadelphia book distributors were present, and I asked them to speak their realizations. They want to see more devotees take part in book distribution, not just themselves. It isn't enough to encourage them as a small, valiant group; they want to see everyone doing it. Some are critical of managers maintaining a big temple as we are doing at Potomac. Some also said everyone should go on *hari-nāma*, chanting in the streets. Yet someone said it was up to the book distributors to be positive and encourage the other devotees to go out, not to just make negative criticisms. The criticism sometimes gets heavy toward householders or toward anyone doing anything other than book distribution. But the book distributors have the *sāstras* and Prabhupāda's emphasis on their side. They should appreciate, though, that there are many kinds of persons joining our movement. . . . Anyway, the dialogue keeps going back and forth, and the pressure is on me to see that book distribution is not neglected, to see it is increased, and to lead the way by participation

in preaching and *hari-nāma*.

Now I am back at Potomac, which is a different story. Here action and results are also required, but of a kind which is different than the downtown center. I have to empathize with both projects—the book distribution in downtown D.C., and the beautiful New Hastināpura Deities, the wonderful potential of Their land, the gradual development of engaging devotees and inspiring them to stay here and develop.

Encouragement

A word of encouragement
can change my whole outlook
as when sunlight clears the clouds.
Maybe at midday I am feeling slow,
wondering if I have done anything at all
to serve Prabhupāda,
doubting whether I have any hope,
but all it takes is a sincere devotee's word
pointing out the good,
and hope pours in.

October 11

MORE ON SELFHOOD

By *self-realization*, I know that I am the servant of God. There is no self unless I realize it in relation to the Supreme Self, Kṛṣṇa. But neither can one realize Lord Kṛṣṇa unless he knows himself as the loving servant of the Supreme. We are not like the Māyāvādīs or Buddhists who try to make the self impersonal or void.

In pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the self cannot exist apart from God. We live to serve Kṛṣṇa and glorify Him and rejoice in Him. Thus, there are always two selves in *bhakti-yoga*, the *bhakta* and the Bhagavān, and the process of exchange is *bhakti*, love. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them" (*Bhāg.* 9.4.68).

Establishing the identity of the individual self, Lord Kṛṣṇa states in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be” (Bg. 2.12). And to establish the eternality and completeness of the Supreme, the Lord states, “Brahmā, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Personality of Godhead” (*Bhāg.* 2.9.33). Other śāstric statements give us both the Supreme and the individual units:

1. “The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. . . .” (Bg. 15.7)

2. “The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him such as this phenomenal world [and such as the individual *jīvas*] are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the complete whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the complete whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance” (*Īśopaniṣad Invocation mantra*).

In this mainstream of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I desire to flow with my journal. Daily thoughts and events in a spiritual life bring out Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the most authentic way we can know it, as perceived through the individual self. Through self I hear the morning class, I take the *darśana* of the Deity, and I recall the order of my spiritual master and try (though inadequately) to follow him. All *bhakti-yoga* action takes place within the sincere exchange of individual self and Supreme Being.

According to *Bhāgavatam* philosophy, the world of illusion which appears to overwhelm us with its power and influence is just a mirage. It is within the energy of God, but when illusioned souls try to control it without connection to Kṛṣṇa, then it becomes “that which is not.” Vaiṣṇavas, especially those in the disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya, try to unite not only

themselves and their devotee friends in union with Kṛṣṇa, but they work to expand transcendental knowledge to everyone in the world. Yet even this greater task of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must be performed by individual selves. Each preacher realizes his connection to Kṛṣṇa and speaks the universal philosophy of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* based on personal realization and personal discipleship to a bona fide guru. We are always persons, but not petty persons; we are preachers, welfare workers, lives dedicated to serving Kṛṣṇa and humanity.

October 12

An Indian friend related to us what the Indian community dislikes about ISKCON. They don't like it when our lecturers say Lord Śiva is "a demigod." Call him Mahādeva. (We thought afterwards we'd get a picture of Lord Śiva for the temple wall, and maybe a diorama in a glass as they have in Bombay—a scene of Lord Śiva drinking the ocean of poison.) They are also offended when our speakers mention sex in a Sunday lecture with the women and children in attendance. Even though we speak of sex in order to say it should be controlled and renounced and used only in the service of Kṛṣṇa, they take offense at its being mentioned at all. And they don't like it when the speakers seem to say the same things over and over.

They also don't like it that our temple presidents change so frequently and that these changes occur without our notifying our Indian friends. They also don't like it when they come to the temple during the week and see plates with food lying about and flies buzzing on them. They want us to allow them more participation so that they will feel at home. All of his words were welcome, and we will try to do as he suggests. Our temple should not be seen as a place run by foreigners. Nor is it *our* temple only for the use of the devotee mothers and their children. Open it up, let the others worship and even play volley ball in our field if they like, and let them make their personal *pūjā* offering before the Deity.

We are also trying to buy the Potomac property. Details of that complicated transaction go forward each day. Also, Guru dāsa

says his father may be getting ready to deprogram him for a second time. Also, yesterday the temple president was sought by police with a warrant for his arrest, a trumped-up assault charge by a boy who our men sent to jail because he stole one of our cars. Also, phone calls line up, and letters to me from August remain unanswered . . . and still I don't attend the monthly BTG meetings or the zonal management meetings. The doctor asks me how I am feeling, and I say I am fine, but that I have not faced or passed the tests of doing what used to be normal duties, such as more meetings each day. He says, "If you don't do your duty, you will feel guilty and that will not be good." So far, I have been enjoying freedom from headaches and recovery of health. But there is more to go. Neither am I sure that I want to return to exactly the quantity of stress which was my previous normal workload.

October 13

Yesterday on a walk I told Baladeva that the doctor wants me to resume more normal work habits. I expressed my desire to write steadily. Writing is a primary work of mine and should be given time just as I give worktime for meetings and management. So consulting together, we have made a new schedule which gives me three hours daily for writing.

I may resume compiling *Prabhupāda Nectar* anecdotes, or essays for *Living with the Scriptures*. Or perhaps for awhile I'll give the scheduled time to more deliberate efforts at poems. It's a fact that for me, the creation of a Kṛṣṇa conscious poem is work of highest priority and satisfaction. My friends express appreciation for my books, but they sometimes expect the books to pop out of a magic box. I'm as much to blame for the "magic box" attitude as anyone else, because if asked whether I'm writing something, I usually reply off-hand, "Nothing much. Sometimes some poems."

I returned to normal attendance in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. I had been attending only when I gave the lecture. I was thinking, "This may not be so interesting, hearing ordinary

devotees, even my disciples, speaking at length on *Bhāgavatam*. But I have to set the example." Am I so proud? Am I averse? Can't I enter the spirit?

Girijādhava dāsa spoke on Kardama, in whose semen the Lord appeared. In His transcendental pastimes, He can do as He likes. "To test our faith," said Giri, "and to bewilder the demons." I am glad he is speaking on the *līlā* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, this is what I want and need. By hearing, Kṛṣṇa, the Acyuta, will agree to be conquered.

October 14

At the Sunday festival last night, I lectured about *prasādam* to the guests. I had heard that they like lectures on specific topics and with stories. So I told different stories about *prasādam*, such as how Nārada Muni became a great devotee by once tasting the remnants of the Vaiṣṇavas, and how Lord Caitanya fed a dog pulp of coconut and the dog thereafter went back to Vaikuṇṭha, and how Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira were saved from great embarrassment. They could not feed the ten thousand disciples of Durvāsā Muni, but when Lord Kṛṣṇa ate a small speck of food which they had cooked, all ten thousand were satisfied. Today was the second day of complete fasting for me, but by the evening I was feeling very light and exuberant for lecturing to the guests.

Nārāyaṇa-kavaca and I went for a walk at Great Falls Park. He said that the devotees here don't know whether to really hope or believe that I am making this my temple and that I'm going to stay here. I said that I had heard the same about him, doubt whether he would be the permanent leader. Neither of us has full spontaneous attraction for the project, but we see it as duty, and part of the duty is to make a permanent commitment. With my words I have advocated keeping the temple and doing something wonderful for the Deity, and it seems that I have pacified the opposition. But the price of my victory is that I will have to stand by my words: stay and develop Potomac. So we are entering a mutual pact.

October 15

At 5:30 A.M. I thought I was too tired so I slept, but a nightmare

came, including a King Kong monster rising from the ocean and dismantling cities. I woke just in time to attend *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. The message of the nightmare: better not to sleep during these auspicious early hours.

In the temple room, at the beginning of the class, hardly anyone had gathered. Nārāyaṇa-kavaca gave the lecture and spoke on distinguishing between material and spiritual life. Every day there's another class, another *śloka*, instruction to committed devotees. We need to hear as much as the nondevotees. We need to grow stronger, keep steady.

I want to be like a hungry cat licking a plate of milk in my relish of the *Bhāgavatam* class. Even if a new devotee is presiding, I can tune in to the eternal message. I want to sit and hear continuously, because in *bhakti-yoga*, the means is the end. By regularly hearing the *Bhāgavatam* class we have already achieved the goal. Dirty things are leaving the heart.

I think if I go to Gītā-nāgarī I will find something special there that will work over me as I sit in the woods. Outdoors! There thoughts come and go, and you can go after them.

We know the philosophy but when we write we find our own realizations. Then we can be peaceful and escape the tedium of the day, or crisis of the day. That is a benefit of being alone, to go toward your own center where you find not only peace and strength for yourself, but images to express to others. But it has to be sought without false ego. And if you want to make a poem-offering, it has to be offered humbly, with a genuine desire to share: Here is something I found, an offering to the Lord and to His devotees.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious writer is begging alms — whatever he gets he will share with friends.

Likes

I like to rise early and succeed
in wondrous reading of Prabhupāda's books.
I like to think of Vṛndāvana.

I like to be in a place where
nature and God consciousness are combined,

like the Yamunā at early morning,
 or even a city
 if my mind grasps
 the mission of Prabhupāda.

I like to walk on the forest path
 if I am thinking of Kṛṣṇa.
 I like devotees,
 I like ISKCON, I like Prabhupāda.
 And I also love; I love Kṛṣṇa.
 I like chanting,
 I like all the right things,
 but not enough.
 I don't hate my reluctance.

I was making plans to visit Gītā-nāgarī to track the autumn, but now it looks like I'll be staying here at Potomac. There are also natural scenes here, like today a sudden storm arose and yellow leaves blew from the trees to the lawn. And there's that small wood path on our property. There the leaves are wet and colorful, lots of reds. I intend to put a chair up there for outdoor writing, but it won't be the same as Gītā-nāgarī.

October 16

WHAT DO I WANT IN KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS?

I want to do the needful. That means I want to work in a surrendered way. And I want to be satisfied at it.

We should not try to imitate exactly what Prabhupāda did. We are not so vain as to think we have to cover the whole world. This was recently stated by Vijitātmā dāsa, who was saying that different disciples of Prabhupāda show some of his *śaktis*, but we should not crazily think that one of us can have all of them.

Yet Prabhupāda did say we should make thousands of disciples, and we should do something wonderful. We should tax our brains. He said we should work as hard as we can. If we are not ambitious, how will this movement grow? If we can build bigger temples than Prabhupāda built and distribute more

books than we did before 1977, that is desirable. But we have to balance his different sayings and be realistic, within our own powers. *Varnāśrama* system also calls for us to work within our tendency. And the ISKCON government commands us to follow authority and not just to set out on our own.

When we say that one should have inner qualities and be a *brāhmaṇa* and love Kṛṣṇa, it means that he should give conscientious time to studying Prabhupāda's books and to chanting well and living a regulated life, being simple, not too opulent in style, being a devotee who relishes the basics.

And everyone must be a preacher. Even if we say the era of the supermanager as the only advanced devotee is now finished, yet there is never an end to the era of becoming distinguished by preaching. Some go out traveling from college to college, some go into the city with a bus or on foot with a bag of books—book distributors, fund collectors, Indian community preachers, home programs, *nāma-haṭṭa*, talking to professors, and writing too, spreading the holy name. Or some may support the spreading of the holy name. But everyone who follows Prabhupāda, including the *brāhmaṇas*, including the *kṣatriyas*, including the *vaiśyas*, must preach.

So I ask myself, what do I want to do? And they ask me how long will I stay in residence at Potomac. I say I will stay here and that I will write and that I will travel as a *sannyāsī* should and I will keep on trying to do as much as I can and increase. But I also have to see what our G.B.C. body wants me to do, and that will be decided in five months at the Māyāpur meeting.

COMMITMENT TO WRITING

In his *Bhāgavatam* talk, Brahmānanda mentioned that to please Kṛṣṇa one does not have to be very poetic or literary; in fact, one does not even have to be literate. He then laughed and said that perhaps he shouldn't be saying this in Potomac ISKCON, the home of Gītā-nāgarī Press and the devotee who tends so much to literacy. I encouraged him and made a remark how the spiritual master of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was himself illiterate, and yet he was the greatest devotee.

Literacy is not needed, only devotion. I was not threatened by these remarks because I feel fixed in my own conviction that writing is my service. Certainly literacy used in the service of Kṛṣṇa is very much in our *sampradāya*.

I like to produce Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. I like to think that when I have to die, the writing will give me a consolation, "Yes, I am leaving something in this world which will help others." Of course, I like to think my books will not be destroyed by holocaust—at least a few copies may remain—I really have a sense that books are permanency, even though other things may blow up, become captured, censored, burned. So we should spread the books out.

It may be my *karma*, and therefore I'm trying to use a material tendency in His service. Or it may be His direct will for me, that I, a *jīva*, serve Him in this way. I think writing books is the way for me to grow. I have not received any direction from my guides to contradict my strong tendency. It is what I can do, and it is a potent way. As Prabhupāda wrote, "The first duty of a person in the renounced order of life is to contribute some literary work for the benefit of the human being in order to give him realized direction toward self-realization" (purport, *Bhāg.* 2.2.5).

October 17

I just wrote a letter to a Godbrother stating that I am who I am and please accept me that way. And if you don't accept me, I'll go on being what I am. Why do I take such a strong self-stance? What does it have to do with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and submission to Śrīla Prabhupāda? I think the assertion is part of individual growth in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I want to be myself so that I can best serve Śrīla Prabhupāda. Too often I get molded by a stereotyped opinion of what a G.B.C. manager is supposed to be, or I become molded by what another wants of me. When I am pushed too much I cannot really respond. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

I am not making this assertion as a permanent declaration, but sometimes self-assertion is necessary. A Godbrother wants me

to attend a weekly meeting and he makes propaganda that unless I do it, I am not a qualified leader. But I prefer not to attend it, nor do I feel it is neglect. I told them to let me do things my own way.

Little Poems

Waking at ten P.M.
just before the car slows down,
I heard them smack
the Hare Kṛṣṇas' mailbox—
& the screech of rubber tires.

Many dreams!
The rejected world returns.
When will Kṛṣṇa see me fit
for pure dreams & pure meetings?

Maṅgala-ārati:
Just before God appears,
we stand before the curtain.
Here's smiling Śyāma—black,
shining Rādhārāṇī;
Sītā-Rāma nearby blessing.
In Their kindness
They allow us near.

October 18

I was sitting for *prasādam* in the temple room with an Indian guest. He was one who mostly sees the little faults we Western (ex-*mlecchā*) devotees commit. First he told me that my left hand should be placed on my lap while eating. Nārāyaṇa-kavaca was reading aloud from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* for the devotees' pleasure. It was a section about Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya and in the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda expounded the glorious conclusions of Lord Caitanya, distinguishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness from all other *sampradāyas*. I thought, "It will be good if this man beside me is hearing the exact position of Kṛṣṇa

consciousness, since he may think he already knows it all. He may think that everything is 'one.'" When Nārāyaṇa-kavaca read the words, "Ganges River," the man turned to me and said, "Whenever it says 'Ganges,' you should pronounce it 'Gaṅgā,' because that is a holier sound and the other is wrong." I nodded in agreement. I could understand that he was not listening to the *siddhānta*, but to the faults. Nevertheless, *prasādam* and hearing will work.

Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if born in the families of dog-eaters, such persons are worshipable. Persons who chant the holy name of Your Lordship must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Āryans. To be chanting the holy name of Your Lordship, they must have bathed at holy places of pilgrimage, studied the *Vedas* and fulfilled everything required.

—*Bhāg.* 3.33.7

I didn't perform as well as expected after my first two-day fast. Therefore, when trouble came again on trying the next two-day fast, the doctor recommended that I break it. I expressed disappointment based on a time schedule whereby I thought I would be all well and ready to travel on December 1. The doctor gave sensible advice. "There is no way to health, but health is the way." In other words, it's a perpetual self-improving, not that once I'm "cured" I stop right health practices. This is not a negative or neglectful attitude, but a positive one with emphasis on active devotional service. In the past, my attitude toward health was positive in the philosophical sense, but was somewhat fatalistic about the frequency of diseases I thought all mortals were doomed to. Now I am getting a more advanced understanding of health by practicing natural hygiene in the service of Prabhupāda.

But it is important that I act normally and be active right now. With this sensible "action now" attitude, I spoke last night with two interested young men. Greg has been practicing TM for fourteen years and is now switching to chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He said he had difficulty in giving up the silent meditation and feels

physical illness in withdrawal from that addiction. I told him it was mostly a crisis of faith and that if he became convinced in intellect and spirit that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is superior, then he won't mind even if there is some feeling of regret on giving up his former practice. For example, if a man was giving up smoking after twenty years of habit, he might feel some withdrawal, but he would know by his intelligence that it was good to give up. I also explained how the *śāstras* inform us that silent meditation was really possible only in a remote age in the past. Greg also explained that his girlfriend was still practicing TM and asked whether it was possible for a devotee and a non-devotee to live together as man and wife. I told him that he should just develop himself and see what Kṛṣṇa desires.

The other young man who came last night was an Indian named Avinash who asked why we chant the *mahā-mantra* "backwards." He was raised to chant it Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma. . . . He also asked why we call Śiva a demigod, since Lord Rāma Himself worshiped Lord Śiva. I answered the questions as best I could, according to *paramparā*. I felt like a serviceable typewriter, with Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa punching the keys. The servant should serve.

October 19

WHAT IS A RELIGIONIST?

Pascal guessed that a religionist is right and that at death the hedonist will be proven deathly wrong. It is worth the gamble that there is a next life. "You must wager; this depends not on your will, you are embarked in the affair. . . . Since you must . . . choose, your reason is no more wounded in choosing one than the other . . . but what of your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and loss in choosing 'heads' that God is . . . if you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then unhesitatingly that He is. . . ." (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*)

We have more solid proof. But it should not be taken in the mood of a safe bet. Taking to spiritual life is taking to a challenge. Śrīla Prabhupāda calls the transcendentalist, "Daring and active in the service of the Lord."

If you consider Śrīla Prabhupāda as a religionist, then you

have a completely different vision of “religionist.” Bold, transcendental lover of Kṛṣṇa, soldier, fighter like Arjuna—yet strict celibate, beautiful, compassionate *sannyāsī*. And the Supreme Lord Himself appeared as Lord Caitanya, a *sannyāsī* monk. He was always in ecstatic mood of chanting and dancing and sometimes swooning, and His followers, the six Gosvāmīs, were in trance in Vṛndāvana. They were running on the bank of the Yamunā, appearing like madmen crying, “He Rādhē!” associating intimately with like-minded devotees, and writing books to help mankind.

So where am I? Still moving toward what I want to be.

Little Poems

1

Kṛṣṇa and Guru

I think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead
from the book
in the Deity
in the mind
standing in three-fold bending form.
& I think of my *guru*
seated in the morning
bringing us back to Godhead.

2

Guru and Śiṣya

My own disciples
knowing my smallness
lovingly serve me
because of our lineage,
Prabhupāda’s grace.

3

The Yellow Leaves

Everyone knows it,
but we forget it:
The yellowing leaves
are Kṛṣṇa’s.

4

Recording Saṅkīrtana

It's Lord Caitanya's movement
 as He makes it happen.
 It breaks like a surf
 all over the world.
 And a small participant
 like a sandpiper running
 is also recording this epic time.

October 20

I'm trying to figure out why there is a temporary setback in my recuperation from the headache syndrome. The doctor keeps encouraging me that this is bodily purification and that I still have fifty-five percent to go in getting better. Baladeva and I looked carefully at my new schedule and noticed that I've taken on too many activities all at once. The eight to eleven A.M. writing has become a hard-driving brain session. Also, participating in every single part of the morning program is strenuous. After those activities, when a headache comes it's hard to combat it, because the afternoon is a solid block of personal meetings plus letters to answer, etc.

Therefore, I propose to slow down. Most important time schedule is for me to be fit for full duty by February 1986, so that I can go to India for the G.B.C. meetings. Before then, I may stay here where I can do important preaching just by residing and taking part in assisting the Potomac project.

Yesterday I learned I'm implicated in a legal case. A woman suing ISKCON named me in her affidavit. My own involvement is slight except that I am a responsible officer. It didn't disturb me much to hear it and I'm preparing my own affidavit. This is part of preaching for Kṛṣṇa, defending Lord Caitanya's movement against attacks from outside and from those who blunder while they are supposed to be working on ISKCON's behalf.

So if I look at how to plan this day, I should conserve myself for the most important parts—a talk on the phone regarding the legal case, and my lecture to the Sunday evening guests. Other activities like seeing the Deities and setting the standard for the

other devotees here by attending all parts of the program and holding my usual Sunday meeting with the devotees may be cancelled so that I can do top priority events. This is the vital and economical use of energy. Even the life-giving writing session has to become less of a sustained effort, pounding away at the typewriter. Chanting (*kīrtana*) and reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books (*śravaṇam*) should be given more priority.

Sometimes we see spiritual life in material terms. For example, we see so many discrepancies in this temple, in the unwillingness of the devotees, and in the disorganization of the management. So are these discrepancies actually material or spiritual?

It is a fact that material can get mixed into spiritual. That is called *prākṛta-bhakti*, or *bhakti-yoga* mixed with material desires. Lord Kapila discusses extensively how devotional service may be performed mixed with the modes of ignorance and passion, such as when anger or enviousness or prestige enter, or when one approaches God for one's own interest. Pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness is above the mixtures, but the discrepancies sometimes manifest in our lives and in our temple life. If on finding mistakes one becomes very critical and stays apart from the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and if he finds fault with the struggling devotees, then his position is not auspicious.

We should work together and try to improve. Prabhupāda always saw the good in what the neophyte devotees were doing and he encouraged them. He encouraged anyone who was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. The chanting puts one millions of miles beyond any other accomplishments of a competent nondevotee life, or the smooth efficiency of a mundane corporation. To be imperfect but situated on the path of devotional service is better than being so-called perfect as a critic of the devotees.

But the *guru* must criticize his disciples. That is his duty. And he must inspire them to become more renounced and more eligible for Kṛṣṇa's mercy. He looks for the fault in his disciples in order to correct them, but he always sees the overwhelming good. As Prabhupāda said, "The big thing is they have given

everything, even their lives, to Kṛṣṇa—and that is never a mistake” (SSR, letter to Lynn Ludwig).

I am in the midst of this community but unable to fully wrangle with affairs for improving the income and morale. Living with the imperfection also implicates me. As Kṛṣṇa Gopāla might say, I am accepting the rut we are in. But we cannot create a completely transforming revolution overnight. Things are improving. The Sunday feast, for example, is up to eleven sumptuous preparations. And yesterday our newly joined *bhaktas* went out for the first time on *saṅkīrtana* and did well. We’re also making efforts to cultivate our Indian congregation. But we’re a long way from a dynamic, harmonious community. The women here talk their *prajalpa* and form groups for gossiping against one another, and of course they have to spend much time caring for their children. But the bright side is that the children are daily seeing Kṛṣṇa, chanting Kṛṣṇa, and the ladies are also living in His shelter.

Letters

Letter from a disciple in jail:

“My day revolves around the chanting,
but I am still bitter
that I lost my wife and kids.”

Letter from Czechoslovakia:

“Many books were confiscated
but we gave the Nobel poet a *Gītā*
and he liked it very much.”

Unsent letter to a friend:

Come soon, and I will spend
much time with you,
a friend in your distress.

Letter to Prabhupāda:

I am always looking forward
to your eternal service,

but I am slow and unfit as yet:
I don't dare to enter the fire of ordeal.
But I'm keeping to the simple things you taught.
Please remember me and
punish me in some fit way,
keep me close, your servant.

Letter to the birds:
Gnat-eaters, killers, filthy ones,
they say it is wrong to speak of you,
but many poets sing of you,
and I have this year noted your antics,
reminding me of your Maker.

Letter to my secretary:
I thank my spiritual master
for sending me strong aid.

Letter to readers:
This book is a simple journal
yet packed with many pages.
My hope is it may help you
with moments of pleasure
in spiritual life.

Letter to the day:
I'm looking for the chance
to chant the holy name in your hours.
Glide on, I know you will,
and I may savor the changes,
engaged in His service.

Letter to the body:
Limited energy,
burning-down-flame,
please hold together for decades—
I need the time.

I'll treat you right,
just hold up, old cart,
the journey isn't over.

To śiṣyas:
I just want to live for you
no sins no fall-downs
repeating the message as it is
so you can say, "He served us,
he did a job,
he stayed with Prabhupāda."

To Prabhupāda's books:
You give all freely
to whoever approaches.

Day of Durgā-pūjā, and rainy, but still a hundred Hindus attended our temple hall. I spoke on *dharmāḥ svanuṣṭhiṭaḥ puṁsām*. By their work they have to serve Kṛṣṇa or all is wasted. The Vaiṣṇavas will guide them in how to do it. I told the story of Nārada and the hunter and the story of Lord Caitanya and the Kūrma *brāhmaṇa*. Afterwards, a man asked why I said *karma* was the same as occupation. Another man asked if we could offer eggs to Kṛṣṇa since nowadays they made them without being fertile. And a man asked if we could offer meat to Kṛṣṇa. The meat question gave me a chance to explain about Kālī-pūjā. Anyway, it is wonderful seeing lots of devotees gathered and to be given the chance to speak about Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Today I got a letter from a Godbrother who advised me that I have to take up more my responsibility to meet with other Godbrothers as they desire it. He's right, but I am still making the plea of illness, which prevents me. Although I also have a strong tendency not to meet with many, I will, I will, I promise. . . . Let me get strength and I will. In the meantime, at least I can speak before our guests and in limited measure meet with others. I'm grateful to be reminded of what I should do by a well-meaning Godbrother.

Right now they're taking the feast. It looks quite good, about
eleven well-prepared items of *prasādam*.

At lecture's end: my rush of satisfaction.

October 21

Potomac Pictures

Monday rain pattering
on whitewashed buildings.
Where is everyone?

Rock song touches
in the lead singer's *kīrtana*:
dancing in circles.

Carrying his son
in the laundry basket,
a *gṛhastha*.

Their *guru* watches
from a window —
brahmacārīs with a basketball.

Willow tree now,
this rainy day,
and dreams of a future temple.

Waiting to see
the burning demon
in the darkening field.

A feast for a *sannyāsī*:
solitude and fasting.

Mahānidhi Swami is going to India today for the month of
Kārttika in Vṛndāvana. He plans to concentrate on memorizing
śāstric verses as well as reading *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Kṛṣṇa* book,
chanting *japa*, and doing some Deity worship at Krishna-

Balaram Mandir. His motive is to get rejuvenated for returning as preacher to his regular duties in Baltimore. I was inspired to hear him speak of it, and I also would like to memorize some verses.

My reclusive nature may become an issue for myself as well as for others. I've already described it in an essay, and I know there is a limit to it. A preacher should be open to meet with others and desirous always to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I feel that many meetings I am asked to participate in are not so vital and can be done as well by others, and in fact my disciples may sometimes represent me at such meetings. There's so little time in the day—after one attends the morning program and does some routine work, there's only a question of a few hours. Or am I evading this issue? Or is it too soon to tell, since I'm still ill and require some rest alone, and since meetings provoke headaches? What if they continue to provoke headaches?

—My writing is preaching.

"That's okay, but Śrīla Prabhupāda says you have to meet nondevotees."

—I'm willing to do programs.

"But do you admit to a craving for being alone a large part of the day?"

—Yes. And I like to use it for writing. I don't think it's wrong, especially if I have a preaching program each evening.

IMAGINATION

A picture comes to mind. . . . I am preaching nightly to a room full of guests in a place like Ireland. There are challenges, but some are becoming devotees. I'm in good health and traveling, but there's time for writing books. The books are coming out well and wonderful things are happening in the development of projects. At Potomac, many devotees are joining and I am caring for them and preaching to them. . . . Godbrothers are telling me that my book-writing is very important and devotees are imploring me to take time to write a journal and more poems as if it's exactly what they want. In this imagined picture, I am getting more strength to chant and desire to read and real

impetus to speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus I am entering all kinds of forums and entering reality. . . . The impetus to always talk about the teachings of Kṛṣṇa to whomever I meet fills my being, and thus my writing also becomes filled with this. . . . My disciples grow strong and start to enact greater things against obstacles of time and place. . . . We build a great temple at Potomac-dhāma.

FACTS

We go out walking in the rain. A young deer and its mother on a suburban lawn run away less frantically than those we find in the deep woods. As we drive past the neighboring Montessori school I envy them; they are considered respectable, and their front signs are not vandalized like ours. Yet their way is simply speculation while ours is based on solid knowledge. How blind the world is!

At the park, the mallards in the canal have bright green necks, the females are brownish. Today there are no human walkers and the ducks take to the wet footpaths. Baladeva and I speak of whom I shall meet and then our conversation jumps from one agenda topic to another. Great Falls thunders from the swelling rain.

Baladeva says why not make the cover of *Journal and Poems* your vision of the temple that we want to build at Potomac. I think the idea is premature: we haven't even decided on the architecture, and the temple personnel can hardly organize a kitchen clean-up in the temple, what to speak of raising millions and planning for construction of buildings! Besides, if I put my vision for a temple on the cover of a book, won't that commit me to stay and do it?

Tonight we began an impromptu *Bhagavad-gītā* class in my room. A few devotees gathered and they started reading the Introduction and commenting on Prabhupāda's writing. I felt enlivened; it occurred to me that this is the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for which I often seem to be groping.

Śrīla Prabhupāda establishes at the beginning that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and he gives evidence. Repeating his evidence to the devotees in the room—use of the word *bhagavān* to address Him, acceptance of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme by great *ācāryas*, Kṛṣṇa's own statements that He is the Supreme Being—I felt qualified as a devotee and *guru*. We read on, about Arjuna's position as friend and devotee and how the *Gītā* must be heard in devotional service as Arjuna accepted it. A real student of *Bhagavad-gītā* is one who is seeking a solution to the threat of nonexistence. This is my *forté*, my duty, by subject matter—speaking on Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*. The talk forums may differ—a small gathering of devotees, a bigger, more formal group, Hindus, Americans, in classrooms, in homes—and I should seek out the different forums—but this mainstream speaking I should not neglect, even while other services make their demands. So we will try to continue the evening class.

October 22, Dream: 3:00 A.M.

My mother and sister tell me I seem to be morose; they say I used to be more cheerful. I protest that there is nothing really wrong with me, I just have to become more Kṛṣṇa conscious. Then later in the dream the subject of my moroseness is being discussed by devotee friends of mine. I wake rejecting all this as shameful talk.

Now my waking thought turns to my reclusive tendencies. I see these tendencies as a stage in my life, definitely connected with my being ill and with the strain of managerial G.B.C. work which demands heroic dealings with others. I like to assume full leadership as given to me by Prabhupāda, but I want to manage in a certain way. But G.B.C. management, or even brahminical work, demands meetings with devotees as well as nondevotees.

I should think more about this tendency of mine toward a kind of creative and spiritual solitude, in order to watch it. I have not consulted intimately about this with Godbrothers. Should I see it as a temporary phase of health recuperation, or as an *anartha*, a weed in devotional service to be plucked, or is it a

healthy inner spiritual growth conducive to becoming a pure devotee? By chanting and reading and writing may I become a “*ṛṣi*” to serve ISKCON in the way best suited to me, in a way which is also active? As with similar questions about one’s service, I should avoid simplistic, black-and-white thinking. I remember a few years ago thinking that these managerial demands were most important and that my writing should be entirely abandoned. But that was not possible. “What can repression accomplish?” I have already noted that to be a writer in Kṛṣṇa consciousness one has to face the reality of service strains. Qualifying oneself to write about Kṛṣṇa.

Then I think of the many devotees serving in this movement and how their work is often difficult for them and how they need regular personal guidance and inspiration. But how best to supply it? However I act to help them—whether by writing books, newsletters, personal correspondence, by meeting them in groups or by meeting them individually or by guiding my representative to meet with them—the work of supplying devotees regular guidance is a constant service for me. Neglect of this service in the name of reclusive tendency still spells “neglect.” Yet the best inspiration I can give them is to remain a steady Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee, physically, mentally, and spiritually well-fit, and for this I need time and thought about what course of action is best. The danger is to indulge in subtle sense gratification, therefore I have to think very carefully about the distinction between my spiritual need, and those personal desires which are too indulgent. I must take part in the austerity of fighting or straining my capacity, yet it must not be over-endeavor of my actual capacity.

During the *Bhāgavatam* class, one has to speak ideally. Therefore, if one is not following the four rules or chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, he should not be allowed to give class. But it gets more subtle than that. The speaker of the *Bhāgavatam* has to uphold the ideal of surrender and inspire the listeners.

I was asked a question by a sincere devotee, “If we don’t have a liking for our service, should we do it anyway?” I said yes, we

have to finish up all material attachments in this lifetime; we must give up laziness and ease-loving and all forms of sense gratification. By our psychophysical nature, I said, we may be given certain service that we like, yet within that service there is also austerity, long hours, and things we may not like, but we should do it. How could I say otherwise? But do I live up to this ideal?

The *Bhāgavatam* speaker cannot compromise but he has to encourage devotees, even if they cannot immediately surrender. I suggested that if we cannot at once kick out all sense gratification, such as the desire for sex, then at least we have to regulate it with a program for eventual and complete surrender at the end of life. For example, the *gṛhastha-āśrama* is a concession for family life with the intention to regulate it and eventually give it up. The program for ultimate surrender may be a five-year program, ten-year program, but has to work to rid us of all *anarthas* before life is over.

Questions and Answers

1

"How can we convince them
who also think they know
the path to happiness?"
"The truth of *bhakti*," I replied,
"is *amṛta*, eternal.
All else fails.
Sat-cid-ānanda,
eternity, knowledge and bliss,
reside alone in Kṛṣṇa's world.
Of this be sure.
So tell them,
'Bring your happiness
and study it beside
the munificent gift
of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
You will be astounded
at His eternal love.'"

2

They also ask, "How
 can we be attracted
 to the spiritual world?"
 I was tired from speaking,
 not feeling light. On my tongue
 were no relevant examples
 to amuse them and pick them up,
 but I was sure of the *paramparā*.
 (One should not give classes
 for the feel afterward—
 was I good? Will someone praise me?
 But speak to give.)
 "The spiritual world,"
 I said, "is also here and now.
 We have to see the Deity,
 to serve and chant."
 They already heard it
 and I already knew
 but we have to go on hearing it,
 to finally break through.

3

"But doesn't Lord Kapila only teach
 how to be detached?"
 "No, Lord Kapila teaches
 counting up the world
 to discover we're not there
 but also it is He who says,
 'My devotees always see
 the smiling face
 of My Deity form with eyes
 like the rising morning sun.
 And they also talk
 favorably with Me.
 They lose all other consciousness,
 and in spite of their unwillingness
 they get liberation
 from the miseries of life.'

That is what we need to hear.
Now let us see Him, and serve Him,
in the spiritual world."

October 23, Dream: 2:00 A.M.

Someone found a lengthy home movie of ISKCON activities from about fifteen years ago. Our youth! I appeared in the film typing Prabhupāda's dictations and consulting with different devotees. But there was no direct footage of Śrīla Prabhupāda, only his room, showing that his quarters were very simple and rustic with mouseholes along the floorboards. In one scene, devotees were on a luncheon line . . . a man and a woman mixed loosely while talking on the line. Boys I knew from grammar school or high school who never became devotees also appeared in the film as ISKCON devotees.

What is the significance of all this dream-footage? Nostalgia from our youth in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Is it because tonight Dāmodara dāsa showed me a prayer book I kept while I was "Satsvarūpa dāsa Brahmācārī"? (1967–68)— Ah, youth!—is that the theme? Where are those days now? But what does it matter, if we're now old? And wasn't youth raw? Isn't maturity superior, getting free at least of grosser *anarthas*? If I persist in *improving the finishing years*, I can know eternal youth with Kṛṣṇa.

But the enthusiasm—*utsāha*—the fresh wonder, the fact that we were living together, all dependent children of our spiritual master, Swamiji, Prabhupāda! But why wasn't he visible in the film?

Tomorrow I resume the series of fasting days. Dr. Sarma described different kinds of fastings, and said that unless it is done in the right mentality it may be detrimental. Political fasting, for example, while sometimes effective in its mundane objective, has been analyzed by doctors as weakening to energy and health. The reason is that the protester is usually in a passionate, agitated state of mind, filled with his desires.

Another kind of fasting, circumstantial, occurs when there is famine. People in this condition also fare very badly because of their mental state. They have no hope of getting any more food

supply, and although a human can easily fast thirty days and more, those suffering in circumstantial fasting sometimes die much sooner.

And then there is mechanical therapeutic fasting, in which a patient is ordered to fast by a doctor, but the patient is actually not inclined to do so. He therefore thinks regularly of food he would like to eat, releases harmful gastric juices in his stomach, and even after the fast he has not learned the real lessons.

The fasting which has been analyzed as most successful is religious fasting. By remaining in spiritual consciousness, the best physiological results of the fasting can also take place. The physiological benefit is that while fasting the body is really not denied, but is able to enjoy a rarefied food, ether, which is created by the space in the stomach. Without the hard work of digestion, the body is free to repair itself in different ways and to enjoy a new lightness.

Regarding fasting on Ekādaśī, Prabhupāda has written that a devotee fasts at least from grains and beans (although total fast is recommended). But during the day of fasting he especially increases his thinking of Govinda. Almost every day in our life we are thinking of satisfying the tongue and the belly, so if we don't eat as often and we turn our thoughts more to Govinda, there is a spiritual advantage.

Tomorrow night I'm supposed to give the invocation talk prior to an important meeting being held in the Dirksen Senate Building on Capitol Hill. A prominent political Hindu from England, who is also an ISKCON follower, is coming to speak. We will specifically protest oppression of ISKCON devotees in the Soviet Union, and our public affairs office hopes to grab international media attention for the press conference on the morning before the lecture. My own part in this is a formal function, to bless the occasion with some opening words.

10:00 A.M.

From this writing seat in the woods, I see mostly the underbrush and trees in front of me. To the right is a beautiful sight—

tall straight poplars with yellow leaves on their tops. Through holes in the low foliage I see a few of our nondescript buildings and some of the rotted vegetables and cartons our men have thoughtlessly thrown in the woods as if the land were a garbage dump.

I'm here to get out and to get inspiration, to give me and my readers some spiritual food.

King Ambarīṣa with his words always spoke of the Supreme Lord. If one speaks otherwise it is like the croaking of the frog who invites death near. It would be better for one to be a dumb man. For a devotee, however, his silence is to omit all nonsense talk but to talk (and hear others talking) constantly about Kṛṣṇa.

I admit that my writing service has a humiliating aspect to it, and a minor aspect. For example, among writers, the scientific debators of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, who preach against materialistic science, are a more important force. But this is my work and Śrīla Prabhupāda has encouraged each devotee to consider their service as absolute and to think of their own service as most important. If a devotee excels in his service by enthusiasm and determination, then that service will be taken by others as worthy and important. If the *pūjārī* decorates Lord Rāma in a way that inspires the devotion of the onlookers, then he is successful. If the cook nourishes and enthuses the *bhaktas* with his *prasādam* meal, then he is well-loved and valuable. And if the writer of a Kṛṣṇa conscious journal can attract the minds of readers toward Kṛṣṇa, he is successful. Which service is ultimately more important will be decided in an objective way by how pleasing the servant is to Kṛṣṇa, how dependent he is upon the Lord's mercy. And that can manifest from any type of genuine service.

How frustrating and embarrassing! A guest, Gour Hari, arrived from Gītā-nāgarī, but the lunch was not well-cooked. He may go and spread the word, "Gurupāda has the temple following his health diet. It's really bad. Just some potatoes, a little bit of dry *sabji*, some cold spinach *capātīs*, no water was served, and no butter or curds. How could a newcomer join?" It's not

the diet, I protest, it's the lack of organization, the lack of a cook;
it's the Potomac malaise.

Potomac Pictures

The sparrows' diet
is raw food, rainwater,
sunlight, exercise
and full night's rest.
Who taught them this?

The four-day rain stops:
children bow down
in the puddle.

Like giant fireflies,
after the rains,
two 747s.

With Rāma's victory
only four days away
the field for Rāvaṇa's burning
is soaking wet.

Evening

Offices shutting down; devotees finishing their *japa* in half-moon twilight; overhead plane traffic lessening; in the temple room, three devotees sing in *kīrtana*. A Hindu wedding party arrives for the blessings of the Deities, groom and uncle wearing carnations, the women wearing silk and standing with their palms joined in front of God. An elderly Spanish couple also arrive in the temple along with their daughter. They had received a small book, *Rāja-vidyā*, and looked up our address. They ask if we have a Spanish translation of Vivekananda's *Karma-yoga*. Instead, a devotee gives them a Spanish *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. And both wedding party and the Spanish family receive *mahā-prasādam*.

Cats waiting by the back door for a merciful devotee to give them *prasādam* . . . a woman closing *tulasī's* door so the plants

don't catch a cold . . . men back from a day's book distribution, congregating by their vans . . . the new *bhaktas* taking showers after a hard day's work . . . the curtain closing after evening *ārati*.

October 24

Kṛṣṇa Gopāla phoned and gave me my cues for the invocation speech—how to introduce myself, how long to speak, and the topic. I will speak on the innate right and need of every human being to practice spiritual life. The main issue is persecution by the Soviet Union of Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees in Russia. The wife of an incarcerated Russian devotee performed a twenty-one day fast in front of the Russian embassy in Sweden, and as a result her husband was just released from Russia. He will speak to the press and show photos.

I spoke with Kīrtirāja, the devotee in charge of ISKCON in the U.S.S.R., and he hopes our campaign will be international news and help to free other Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees from Soviet prison camps and “hospitals.” Human rights groups and U.S. government officials are expressing sympathy.

I plan to mention in the invocation that it was Śrīla Prabhupāda who personally carried Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Russia, and it is by his pure desires that Kṛṣṇa's name and teachings are spreading there despite official oppression. As described in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*:

Prabhupāda had come to this place and Kṛṣṇa had sent a sincere soul to him to receive the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This had happened not by devious espionage against the Soviet government but by the presence of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee and his natural desire to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by preaching. In response to Prabhupāda's pure desire, Kṛṣṇa had sent one boy, and from that one boy the desire would spread to others. Nothing, not even an Iron Curtain, could stop Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The soul's natural function was to serve Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa's natural will was to satisfy the pure desires of His devotee.

October 25

The press conference was not well-attended and the evening

audience was somewhat sparse (about seventy-five in a hall that held five hundred). Kṛṣṇa Gopāla, Kīrtirāja, Mukunda Mahārāja, and others worked very hard, staying up all night preparing and making press kits, making phone calls, and spending money for the prominent speaker from London and for the Russian devotee to come from Sweden. Still, they said it was worth it because of important contacts they have made with sympathetic politicians and leaders of human rights groups. It is a start of a campaign issue. I thought this is the way Kṛṣṇa sometimes works with His devotees, getting us to attempt something ambitious in His service, and rewarding us in His own way, at a pace and dimension that only He controls.

I'm reminded of the first time I visited Washington, D.C. I was about twelve years old, my sister, fourteen years old. It was an exciting vacation trip for the whole family. Father drove the Dodge sedan with Mother in the front seat, kids in back, all the way from Staten Island, New York. At D.C. we stayed in a hotel, which was a rare thing for our penny-saving family, and I remember eating breakfast in a cafeteria. The only monument I can now recall is our visit to the Lincoln Memorial, where my father, who was usually not religious, told me that the Gettysburg Address was one of the greatest things in the world. Before the gigantic Lincoln statue, we all fell into the mood of awe and reverence, national pride. We too were Americans—thank God, thank country. I also took some photos, one of my sister drinking water from an outdoor fountain.

Now the family is dispersed, the pilgrimage a vanished illusion, and I see Washington, D.C. as a sterile place, the heart of the kingdom of falsity. The whole world is false because it is temporary, but here especially because there are such big displays of power by the politicians, and such a basic dishonesty of leadership. It appears real here—you can see, if you're lucky, the legislators, the judges, and the President in his White House. But the closer you get to them and to *it*, you also feel it is hollow inside.

Last night, across the street from where we parked, a Negro

uniformed guard stood straight up at an auto entrance marked "For Senators Only."

This morning I became angry with Bhakti-latā dāśī in front of other devotees. I wanted to see the effigy of Rāvaṇa finished as soon as possible. Other devotees said they had asked her for it weeks ago, but she said she will do it on her own schedule. Now she is working on sewing an outfit for the Deities. When I heard this, I felt frustrated that despite my repeated inquiries—"Where's Rāvaṇa?"—he still isn't showing up. So I went straight to her. I probably should have counted to ten first.

When I confronted her, she coolly told me of her own schedule: working on sewing a Deity outfit that would be done tonight, and then starting Rāvaṇa tomorrow. Her speaking tone was not very respectful, and she seemed ready to stand me off in my request for an immediate Rāvaṇa. I couldn't simply discount that she also was using reason, trying to serve Kṛṣṇa on her own schedule.

"He will be ready Sunday night, when he is needed," she said.

I could feel my anger swell up, and also a dizziness from fasting. "I don't want to wait until Sunday night," I said, and walked away, not giving her another chance to speak.

From this incident I got an insight how we are all working together in this religious community with our different projects, and that in some ways our activities are comparable to other religious communities. We have our petty quarrels and struggles, personalities mixing, hierarchies, and some aspects of this community life will also be vanquished with time, as all things pass. That doesn't mean that we should not take our work or arrangements seriously. But there has to be a center of philosophical, devotional connection to Kṛṣṇa and guru—that distinguishes us from ordinary religious clubs and workers or political and social groups.

If we do not work together because we see it as unimportant and too much hassle, or if we become impersonalists and see

these ISKCON activities as noneternal ego exchanges, then we cannot be Kṛṣṇa's dear servants. Yet while accepting personalism in *āśrama* life, we have to see it through the *śāstras* and keep working to elevate ourselves and our thoughts. It is not just the work we are trying to accomplish—to sew a dress for the Deities or build an effigy of Rāvaṇa so that the guests will be pleased and it will be called a successful festival—but there has to be right Vaiṣṇava exchange and etiquette, and there has to be the living example of saintly behavior in all that we do. In a sense, our work is all a series of tests, whether we can act as devotees and please our spiritual master. Then only he and Kṛṣṇa will bring the successful result. If we please them, we are right, otherwise wrong. So the essence is—keep trying to behave in spiritual consciousness with mind and senses controlled, and depend on Kṛṣṇa for the result.

But where is Rāvaṇa? He should not appear only at the last hour.

Now the sun is out. Yellowing leaves, turning toward copper, but many green leaves remain on the trees. The bend of the willow tree branches. The low rock wall. As the birds fly horizontally, in the moments when they are not actually flapping their wings, they hurtle forward like rocks or arrows. Now against the blue sky, leaves are fluttering off the branches here and there. Pleasant autumn is holding on for a brief time.

How to know a devotee's actual worth? Individuals and cliques give me their impression of this one and that one. It's hard to make a judgement. Maybe I should avoid even rating them in my mind. Although some seem to be better workers, more loyal, more loving, each one has to be given equal care and credit. I cannot do it fairly, fully. And right now I'm still recuperating. So even while I am here, not much is improving. Why then am I so desirous for success? Do I deserve it? Why am I afraid Godbrothers will come here and see the faults?

Now here comes Dhīra dāsa in a black baseball cap chanting his rounds, although he didn't show himself at all this morning. "Something is troubling him," I should think; how to help him?

I should not just think, “Why didn’t the good-for-nothing get up in time?” I cannot do that much at once for him or others, but little by little I can. They should not be impatient, however, like the one who wrote me, “If you don’t see me today I will go away thinking you are not concerned.”

Before Dasehra

In the drying meadow
at last, the straw demon
begins to grow.

October 26

LISTENING TO TAPES

For Kārttika, I have lined up tapes of devotees reading the last portion of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. I also plan to hear *The Nectar of Devotion* series of lectures Śrīla Prabhupāda gave during Kārttika in Vṛndāvana in 1972. During these days when I am still not fully active, I should carefully hear.

From tape hearing: this morning I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say it is good to be thoughtful, but one must be guided by the spiritual master. He gave the example of Arjuna who was thinking over whether to fight, but who consulted with Kṛṣṇa for a decision. We may be introspective, but if we think only on our own it will do no good. Even if we travel (or think) for thousands of years at the speed of mind, we can never reach God, not by logic or “natural theology.” We have to hear from the *guru*.

I also heard Śrīla Prabhupāda in a conversation with Allen Ginsberg. Allen said that he could not love an authority just because he was an authority. He said he couldn’t even understand an authority who was trying to tell him something that he himself didn’t feel. But Prabhupāda explained that we do accept authorities in every important work of life—for legal help, for medical advice, and certainly the child follows the authority of the parent. Allen was silent and then said, “In America we have a problem with authority.”

It is a fact that we need authority in the most important pursuit, knowledge of spiritual life. And Śrīla Prabhupāda is that

authority because he fully accepts the *paramparā* of great *ācāryas* and *śāstra*. We love him and we accept his authority and we try to follow. Allen Ginsberg then asked Prabhupāda if he knew of his past lives just because it said so in the *śāstra* or had Prabhupāda corroborated that with his own realization. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a brilliant example. He said that according to *śāstra*, if we perform Kṛṣṇa consciousness in our past life, then we are born in a devotional family, or a rich family. Prabhupāda said that since he was six years old he had had a great liking for Kṛṣṇa and had asked his father for Deities. His father wasn't rich but was a great devotee. And also Prabhupāda said that he was born in an aristocratic family, by his association with the Mulliks of Calcutta. So both the *śāstra* and personal experience bore out the same facts.

October 27

WHEN TO RUSH?

I woke thinking of my worship of Lord Jagannātha. I thought of handling the white and gold garments I had picked out for Them to wear today. I fear I may be doing my Lord Jagannātha worship mechanically. Because He is directly Kṛṣṇa, He's harder for me to relate to than Śrīla Prabhupāda. We have the history how He appeared and how Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya worshiped Him, but I lack devotion. So I thought, if only I could enter a more meditative state when dressing and caring for Him. And even if I only have photos of Prabhupāda, I should approach them with care. Thoughtfulness in all I do.

I rush through my morning shower and rush through the chanting of *japa*. Why am I rushing, where am I rushing to? One could argue that we have to do things quickly because there is so much service and this is Lord Caitanya's army. All people are rushing to death and we have to move quickly to catch up to some of them and give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That's true. Yet I thought of a deep appreciation in simple acts such as dressing the Deity. It takes time to concentrate and appreciate. As I race with the clock to early morning duties, I think of taking it slow.

WALKING AND HEARING

While walking, I was feeling good about the hygienic nature of the walk in the open fresh air. I was also hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda through the earphones of the tape recorder. Lecturing on the *Īsopaniṣad mantras*, he said that those who are after protection of the body are culturing nescience. Real knowledge is of the self. At first I thought I might be in *māyā* for my health consciousness in walking. But I recalled how Śrīla Prabhupāda answered every letter to his disciples with the phrase, “Hope this meets you in good health.”

I am walking to get health for prolonged active service. I must never forget that. Otherwise — *sa eva go-kharaḥ*: if I think the self is this bag of material elements, or if I think I can sustain bodily life, I am no better than an ass. The body is going its course to decay and ruin, and nothing can stop that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted from the *Garga Upaniṣad*. There, in a conversation between a learned husband and his wife, the question is raised whether by spiritual practice one can avoid the miseries of the body. The answer is that the miseries of old age and death cannot be avoided *but one who dies knowing the self is a brāhmaṇa*.

Walking and hearing is a good combination.

9:00 P.M.

During our Rāma-vijaya festival, just after the burning of Rāvaṇa, we heard the news that Śrīla Bhaktipāda was very badly wounded by an attacker. He’s in the hospital, in a coma with a concussion. Devānanda phoned from New Vrindaban and asked me to pray to Lord Nṛsimha. We are doing that now in the temple room and all the temples in our zone are doing it. I am poor-hearted, not qualified to pray to the Lord, but the holy name is all-powerful. Chanting tonight is the least we can do for Bhaktipāda, and it is the most we can do. As we prayed to Lord Nṛsimha for Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1967, “Our master has not finished his work,” so Bhaktipāda has not finished his great works at New Vrindaban. He has done more than anyone in building that community, and an attack on his life is an attack at

the heart of ISKCON. Anyway, let me simply record here that we are chanting tonight. My words are not so deep or worthy.

11:00 P.M.

We have made a schedule for all-night prayer. We still have to hear of his condition, which is critical. Everything is in Kṛṣṇa's hands. Bhaktipāda always looked at it in that way, as he learned from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

October 28, Beginning of Kārttika

Bhaktipāda's condition is very grave. Medical details are not given out yet, but it will be a very long period of recuperation. Devotees at New Vrindaban are mainly feeling the relief that he will continue to live in this world.

Last night I was thinking how my own activities and thoughts are minor compared to Bhaktipāda's. Yet I cannot suddenly transform myself and give up all my present conditional ways. If I could consult with Bhaktipāda now as I have done on occasions throughout the years, he would probably encourage me to keep up my routine activities.

In the face of this traumatic event to Śrīla Bhaktipāda and to ISKCON, I almost feel I should become silent. But our lives flow on, and we may continue to honestly speak of the day's routine Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As far as possible, normal life has to carry on. When we speak of *routine* duties, it is not a derogatory term. This is our salvation and solace—to continue our regular day-to-day *sādhana*. The New Vrindaban devotees also will have to do this, not stopping regular steps in their progress to achieve Bhaktipāda's goals for New Vrindaban.

We cannot always understand why Kṛṣṇa acts as He does with His devotees. His plan is inconceivable, and it is better not even to inquire into it. Thus Yudhiṣṭhira was advised by Bhīṣma when Yudhiṣṭhira asked to know God's plan in the matter of the Kurukṣetra war. Many things are accomplished at once by His will, but one thing is certain: the devotees are under His protection.

One lesson is to realize that we each have to leave this world more or less abruptly by the will of providence. Whatever we have done up until the end will determine our next life. Bhakti-pāda, we hope, will have much more to enact in this lifetime, but even if he doesn't, he has done the most important mainstream work at New Vrindaban. Without distraction he has built a community of dedicated, creative *bhaktas*, and they are building a world-class pilgrimage place. Everyone who claims to be a devotee should follow this example: if you are a leader, then work for Prabhupāda's goals without distraction and attempt something wonderful. Or if you can cooperate with an empowered leader, that also will give you the ultimate success.

We wait for news. How can we help? What should we do? It seems we should not simply go on with business as usual, yet what can anyone do? I'm reluctant to go to New Vrindaban, neither have I been asked to go there by anyone. It is a six or seven hour journey and not good for my health. My whole present program is to avoid regular duties and repair health. And even if I traveled there, what could I do at a time like this? If I am called, then I have to consider it, but for now I may be justified in going on with my affairs. But with such great pain in one part of the body, how can the rest of the body be peaceful?

At the place where the Rāvaṇa effigy stood, his footprints are burned into the earth. A devotee is burning garbage in the woods, and smoke drifts toward the neighbors' houses. Today several of us watched for half an hour a Bengali film, "Nimāi of Nadiyā," dramatizing Lord Caitanya's early life. The full moon of *Śāradyā Rāsa-yātrā* rises in the clear, chill night.

Every evening should be spent as if it were the last—memorizing *sāstric* verses, reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and managing. No *prajalpa* or sense gratification or mental speculation. But even plans that may seem noneternal, if they are part of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, are worth pursuing on the "last evening." Śrīla Prabhupāda, for example, up until his last days, kept pushing his preachers to develop their intelligence and organization for developing their *prabhu-datta-deśa*.

*October 29**To Śrīla Bhaktipāda*

I pray to Lord Nṛsiṃha
 for the protection of Kīrtanānanda Swami Bhaktipāda,
 who is a unique, great soul
 empowered by Śrīla Prabhupāda.
 The world is in need of him.
 I pray that he may continue
 guiding the devotees
 with his Kṛṣṇa conscious vision.

All glories to Śrīla Bhaktipāda, who told me
 that he is working at New Vrindaban
 like the bird who tried to empty the ocean.
 As the great carrier of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa,
 came to rescue that determined bird,
 so Kṛṣṇa is bringing wonderful results
 to Bhaktipāda's endeavors.
 I pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Please let him continue.

I offer my obeisances
 to the stalwart devotees of New Vrindaban.
 Bhaktipāda is their life and soul
 and is always with them in his instructions.
 Just as he gave himself freely for many years—
 daily driving in his car to each department,
 so he continues to guide them.
 For he lives forever with his devotees
 in their realizations
 of the unlimited goals for New Vrindaban.

I offer my obeisances to my senior Godbrother
 Kīrtanānanda Swami Bhaktipāda.
 On our initiation night, when I voiced hesitation,
 he encouraged me not to be an impersonalist.
 He quoted Śrī Kṛṣṇa, "All things depend on Me
 as pearls are strung on a thread."

And I felt encouraged
to be the eternal servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Another legal case against ISKCON has landed in court. This one is based on the premises of anticultism, with accusations of mind control, too-much-austerity-and-devotion-to-Kṛṣṇa-as-a-crime, etc. This is why I'm after good health—not to enjoy pleasant ease, but to take my place along with my Godbrothers in drawn-out legal encounters and other stress-heavy engagements. There will be no upcoming shortage of such services; therefore I should patiently prosecute healing and cleansing treatments a few months more so that I can be fully able.

*To Bhaktipāda
A Lament*

1

Pure devotee, individualist,
you are true to Prabhupāda.
You built the best spiritual community,
your devotees are a tribute to ISKCON
and the Temple of Understanding
is supreme preaching.

Every year you are always
full of buoyant, youthful enthusiasm
to speak of New Vrindaban,
your worthy offering to beloved Prabhupāda.
And he loves you very dearly
as a senior son, because
you stay and develop the land.

I look up to you.
I don't doubt that you
are a Vaiṣṇava *guru*
with real community, real followers.
And judged by the results,
you are a spiritual success.

2

But we are bewildered —
why this demoniac beating
on your saintly head?
I know it cannot extinguish
your fine, intellectual mind —
but when will you return to us?
When will we hear you again?

“Why is Māyā allowed
to smash the devotee?”
We cannot know, but
the test is to accept it as His way.
And to Bhaktipāda’s followers
the test is to go on
developing the Land of Kṛṣṇa
into the greatest *tīrtha* of the world.

5

November 1

With electric chandeliers darkened, we sing *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* and light the birthday candles. Each devotee circles a flame before Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and places it in the sand. Little children gather around the burning candles, fascinated.

In class today I said we should be attached to the Kṛṣṇa Deity in our particular temple. Take the order of the spiritual master and go where he says and then approach the Deity there. The charm of the Deity will be revealed to you as you serve under the *guru's* order.

What is the mood of Madana-mohana? Bring many people before Them for *darśana*. Make Them an opulent temple. They are waiting. We are serving. It is a great opportunity.

Kārttika

The pleasure of reading
the creamy pages,
the comfortable print
in Prabhupāda's last
Tenth Canto volume:
Kṛṣṇa with the boys,
as the whorl of the lotus.

When lights are low
and a good singer
measures slowly
the song of baby Kṛṣṇa,
Dāmodara-vrata in U.S.A.
is just as good as Vraja's.

As we walked at Great Falls today I spoke with Graham, an uninitiated devotee. He feels lacking, not being directed, not having a steady service. It's unfortunate that he is suffering from our temple's lack of organization. I said it was also partly

his own fault that he is not satisfied with Kṛṣṇa consciousness in spite of the relative lackings. He says he wants to go to college to learn silk-screening so he can “use it for Kṛṣṇa.” I warned him that he might lose his good intentions along the way. He might learn a material trade but never become a devotee. So his position is precarious. His parents want him to go back to college, and he also likes the idea, and the temple has not been able to satisfy him. I told him I would try to help. We have a few other new devotees here who don’t express as much doubt as Graham. They are busily engaged in various temple duties during the day.

Temple Moments

As I announced,
 “Please help us prepare the feast,”
 Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana’s closed-mouth smile.

Slicing tomatoes,
 shredding cabbage
 listening to class.

Viṣṇu-jvāra sings
Hari Hari Viphale:
 our eyes meet.

Bhaktipāda’s condition continues to be very grave. When I hear the bad news my first reactions are sometimes strange. I almost want to hear the worst just so that I can bear it, and I feel relief when the facts are less than the worst. But these reflex reactions or first impressions are not as important as the abiding emotions or as my actions. If some sacrifice or service is required of me (in this case, to help Bhaktipāda and the New Vrindaban devotees), I should do it. First emotions may or may not be what I should actually live by. It is the same with emotions in chanting the holy name. Tears while chanting can be imitated, but basic

detachment from sense gratification is the more important qualification of the chanter.

November 2

We went out in falling rain, sky growing dark by five o'clock now. It's fun to see the mallards fly a short distance and land heavily on their webbed feet. They are completely tame here, fed by hand.

But we continue to hear that Śrīla Bhaktipāda is not getting better. Another operation was performed. It has been almost a week now and still he's in critical condition.

Yet I keep on making plans—travel in the month of December to Boston, to Philadelphia, back here and then Gītā-nāgarī. At any moment my plans for improved health, for return to service, may be interrupted.

In the immediate situation some people are criticizing me and I am criticizing some people, all in the course of trying to manage men and money in our ISKCON. So life goes on and evening comes at an earlier hour; sometimes it rains and sometimes the sun is out. But at a certain point, one's life is stopped. And then we go on into another body, either in the material form, or in the spiritual world. As we leave this world we may go, one by one, to join with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

PRABHUPĀDA GURU-PŪJĀ

I remember the first times we offered *guru-pūjā* to Prabhupāda in Bombay, 1974—mild weather, after morning walks on the beach. He sat upon the crudely built seat and a devotee offered *ārati* articles while another held up a hand-written sign, *śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma . . .*

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda,
may we sing your praises until our last hours,
and then may we rejoin you
in the next world, as your servants.
Gaining strength each morning
like the *brahmacārī* students of old—

we go out to collect alms for you,
coming back at night,
to drink milk and lie on the floor.

May we always worship you
as the topmost swanlike *guru*
without envy to take your place.
May you shine on us always
your light of *divya-jñāna*.

Give us sight, we are blind;
give us strength, we are very weak;
give us resolution, we are flickering;
give us purity, we are envious and bad.

November 3

I plan to discuss today with Dr. Sarma about his lack of advancement as a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee. Of course, he is under no professional or personal obligation to become a devotee, but since we are in a close relationship as patient and doctor, I should express my feelings to him. Although he has associated intimately with devotees for several months now, he seems to show little inclination to take up our practices. Of course, he is very much occupied with his personal pursuits, taking care of a wife who will very soon deliver a child, pursuing his residency status in the U.S., and thinking how to form a professional career. I know him well enough as a friend to know that he will not be disturbed by my bringing up my disappointment. I thought about saying this before, but held my tongue.

Nāgarāja Prabhu has taken on a tremendous workload of daily duties for maintaining this temple. Since others are reluctant to assist, the hard workers like Nāgarāja have to resist the tendency toward resentment. They can do this by remembering that they are giving their service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and therefore it should never be held back, even if others hold back. Also, if a fully engaged devotee finds he has not much time for per-

sonal projects of *sādhana*, such as memorizing verses, hearing tapes, or reading Prabhupāda's books, he should not give up the attempt to maintain as much *sādhana* as possible.

If I'm too busy to regularly hear Prabhupāda's tapes, I may feel frustration and resentment that this has been denied me, but another course is to squeeze in spare moments, even in a busy schedule, for occasionally listening to Prabhupāda's tapes. I've seen Vijitātmā Prabhu, who goes out daily to distribute books, carrying a tape recorder with him, even in between buildings or in the bathroom, maximizing his hearing of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Increased services along with increased dependence on whatever *sādhana* one can perform are a natural life-saving combination.

Śrī Madana-mohana

Red and black silks,
flow over Your curves,
enhancing our love for You.

With yellow garlands
and silver flute,
You kindly regard us
singing Your *aṣṭaka*.

OBEISANCES TO RĀDHĀRĀṆĪ,
THE GOLDEN QUEEN WE REVERE

The poet says that our love for You should be with no trace of awe and reverence; it should be imbued with pure intimacy. But we are too fallen to directly approach either You or Your Lord. For that we have to wait. It seems far into the future before we are rid of all our unwanted things. Please Mother, accept our service to *guru* and find favor in it.

Young Lord Rāma

Blessing and protecting us,
young Lord Rāma,
bright and pleasing,

be foremost in my heart.

You wear the same colors
as does Madana-mohana,
and we come to see You after seeing Him.
Let us dive into Your *rasa*
O killer of Rāvaṇa,
King of the world.

With all-auspicious palms
You and Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān
pour into our parched vision:
a panorama of Godhead.
In four personal features,
You are filled with poignant bliss;
we drink the water from Your feet.

November 4, 6:00 P.M.

Life is bigger than my journal, but the journal can also tag along. We're going to visit Bhaktipāda. We waited a week, but now as soon as possible we rush out of the house at night trying to catch the last plane to Pittsburg.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the example of airplane pilots who can help each other in training while on the ground, but once in the air, each person has to fly his own plane. We make our own solo flight at the time of death. So Śrīla Bhaktipāda is in a difficult position now and there is not much we can do to help him.

At the airport I saw an article in *Plain Truth* magazine, "What Does God Do When Little Children Suffer?" We know the philosophy of suffering and how in the case of His devotee, Kṛṣṇa takes special charge. Nevertheless, Kulādri informed us that the devotees at New Vrindaban are morose. They want Bhaktipāda well and with them. In his absence it will be hard to console them. We can explain to them once again about service in separation. And we can pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa, as they are doing, to please give us back Bhaktipāda.

November 5, Pittsburg Airport Hotel, 6:00 A.M.

Rādhānātha Swami and Umāpati Prabhu are at the hospital,

and I'll look to them to direct me how to approach Bhaktipāda. They will have the feeling in depth which I lack. My visits to the hospital and to New Vrindaban should not be mechanical or protocol, but an opportunity to intensify thinking of Him.

The strains and sufferings which a pure devotee meets in this world are even more baffling than death itself. Why do the devotees have to suffer? Why are they not honored, but attacked? These things have been carefully recorded and described in the Vedic histories so that we will not be baffled. The trials and tribulations of a devotee are themselves part of his glorious activities, such as the tortures of Prahāda Mahārāja and the continued sufferings of the Pāṇḍavas at the hands of vicious persons. The devotees always came out triumphant, thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa Himself defeated the demons. There is so much advantage even in suffering for a devotee that Queen Kuntī prayed for the difficulties to continue, because they intensified her thinking of Kṛṣṇa. By thinking of Kṛṣṇa constantly, the devotee is assured that he will never again return to this material world.

While I was peacefully and attentively chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, a hotel worker slid the *New York Times*, *U.S.A. Today*, and *Wall Street Journal* under the door. Just by glancing at the headline stories—"KGB Spy: 'C.I.A. Kidnapped Me'"; "Vatican Backs Off On Firing Twenty-four Nuns"—I become distracted. I cannot expect to live in a sealed-off environment, yet when Māyā slips in under the door, I have to be alert to protect myself.

We are in a war with Māyā. The material world is her territory to rule, so we have to be very vigilant in holding on to Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and in steadfastly maintaining Vaiṣṇava behavior. In a warfield, one cannot move carelessly, picking up whatever comes by. If you want to live, you have to use vigilance and discretion. You have to strive to keep your mind the way you want it at the time of death, because that time may come at any moment.

Conversation with taxi driver:

Driver: "How is your man?"

SDG: "We have a leader in the hospital."

Driver: "Yes, I know."

SDG: "He's not getting any better."

Driver: "He'll be all right. You've got to have faith."

SDG: "Yes, either way."

Hospital

Umāpati is a very good via media between the hospital staff and devotees. We went with him to see Bhaktipāda. It is not certain whether Bhaktipāda can hear, but we asked him to get better and join the devotees at New Vrindaban. I felt shy and hesitated to read the *Bhāgavatam* to him, since there were so many nurses and security people nearby. There was a continuous tape playing of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *bhajanas* and purports. We sat silently at his bedside, sometimes touching and massaging his body. I hope to render him more practical service by visiting his devotees at New Vrindaban.

The attack on Bhaktipāda has brought up discussion as to why it happened. Some senior devotees say it is not an isolated act but is connected to the angry criticisms made against ISKCON *gurus*. There may be connections, but I said we should be careful not to create another angry faction.

Some demand to know why Kṛṣṇa has acted in this way. In talking with the devotees at the hospital, I started out saying we don't have to know exactly why Kṛṣṇa acts in a certain way with His devotee. Rādhānātha Swami, however, said Kṛṣṇa acts to accomplish many things at once, and His extraordinary dealings with His exceptional devotee, Bhaktipāda, certainly have meaning for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He sees it as a sign for how the movement can be reunified, especially by giving the right honor to its most spiritually advanced members.

I should not presume that I personally can offer much solace, but we have to all take shelter in Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, just as we did in the difficult days of Śrīla Prabhupāda's illnesses. And we have to show our understanding in practical ways. Surely when Bhaktipāda is able to hear and speak again he will

immediately ask his New Vrindaban workers, “What have you been doing? Are your projects finished? What are the *saṅkīrtana* results?”

November 6, Class notes, New Vrindaban

Devotees here are very submissive and friendly, well-trained. In class I advised that they should not be revengeful against all of ISKCON for what has happened to Bhaktipāda. But all of ISKCON should now better learn to appreciate Bhaktipāda. That appreciation—wakened and intensified now that we almost lost him—should come spontaneously from Godbrothers praising Bhaktipāda and New Vrindaban. Bhaktipāda himself said that reforms in ISKCON cannot be introduced by institutional law but by individual persons. “An institution is the shadow of a man.”

Just now we heard that Bhaktipāda made some more improvements, spoke a few words, his first since the attack. On hearing of this improvement, New Vrindaban leaders are driving two hours back to Pittsburg to the hospital to be with him. “He’ll be all right. You’ve got to have faith.”

It’s really not so difficult to praise Śrīla Bhaktipāda. And what is the harm in it? Is he not a very special devotee of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and is he not due my praise? And the devotees here are grateful for whatever I sincerely say. As he rallies now in the hospital, the New Vrindabanites should rally to become surrendered in body, mind, and soul to Bhaktipāda.

These words I dared to speak in front of the effulgent Deities of Rādhā-Vṛndāvanacandra. My service is now to help increase the seriousness of the devotees here to serve their beloved *guru*. One devotee wrote me, “There may be many causes and reasons for what appears to us as a ghastly disaster, but without a doubt one of the prime reasons Kṛṣṇa must have had in mind was to make us serious and purify ourselves to become fit instruments in the execution of Śrīla Bhaktipāda’s desire.” If I can help them in this, it is a great opportunity for me to do something worthwhile.

Another letter: “We do not ‘blame’ anyone but ourselves. Bhaktipāda’s genuine Godbrothers are ever offenseless and worshipable in our eyes. The envious are never counted anyway, so there’s no difficulty on such a thing.”

*With Bhaktipāda
in New Vrindaban*

The cold drizzle day
is the absence of Bhaktipāda.
But he is present in his śakti.

Brilliant gold on black
palace dome, circling spire,
snapping flag of Hanumān,
Prabhupāda bhajana on loudspeaker,
heavy trucks dumping gravel—
everywhere his śakti.

Bhaktipāda is everywhere
Bhaktipāda is free
Bhaktipāda is dear to Kṛṣṇa.

November 7

“Now if you’ll come forward toward the altar and look up, you will see the interior of the main dome. . . .” A palace guide shows a few cold-day Thursday tourists the features of the inner sanctum, her friendly conversation intertwining Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy with the aesthetics of the palace. Along with Baladeva, Dāmodara, and Bhakta Graham, I sit in the temple facing Śrīla Prabhupāda. Everywhere you look you see Kṛṣṇa conscious art.

Prabhupāda is singing “Yaśomatī-nandana.” Girls are talking in the nearby kitchen. “Do you know who’s the best cook—it’s Bhakta-vatsala, the husband of. . . .” Someone is slicing vegetables on a board. On the altar before us, next to Prabhupāda, is his original New York City bongo drum. I offer my obeisances to that drum and to the palace which surrounds it.

Bhaktipāda's condition upsets sincere devotees around the world. They become anxious, aggrieved, angry and they want to give assurance to the New Vrindaban devotees. Only a demoniac mind could take satisfaction in the attack. It appears that Bhaktipāda is very slowly recovering. That recovery will be another victory and a source of his becoming dearer to Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas.

I ask Rādhānātha Swami if his college preaching in the Midwest is still going on. He says that he has been spending all his time in New Vrindaban, but that his preaching assignments are covered. "I'm a very insignificant person," he says, "it doesn't matter whether I am here or there."

The back-and-forth continues—how to worship the spiritual master after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The possible error of minimizing Prabhupāda by honoring the present ācāryas was strongly presented with a program for change at the September meetings. Now the other side rises—the danger of offense and minimization of the leading ISKCON devotees who are sincerely carrying out their *guru* functions. The relationship of the spiritual masters with their disciples should not be disturbed.

Godbrothers here ask me why did I agree to stop the *guru-pūjā* in the temples in our zone. They hope I was not forced. By their raising the question, they are forcing me to more deeply consider these issues. Somehow we have to satisfy our Godbrothers who sometimes feel that worship of *gurus* after Śrīla Prabhupāda minimizes Prabhupāda's worship—and yet the worship by the new disciples of ISKCON (some who have been serving now for over eight years and who are a far more numerous group in ISKCON than Prabhupāda's disciples) should not be disturbed. We cannot create a nonabsolute version of the *guru*.

I think that it is not wrong if we omit some ritual in the *guru* worship, reserving it for Prabhupāda. I do this mainly so that Godbrothers may be consoled and pacified, and I do it with confidence that my disciples will rightly understand me and not be

diminished in their faith in *guru*. In a few instances, some of my disciples began to take a relative view of their *guru*, but on the whole I do not see that it has become disruptive. We have to be vigilant and take responsibility both for cultivation of the disciples' faith as well as the feelings of Godbrothers.

WHY IT HAPPENED, ACCORDING TO ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

My dear sons, the Lord is the controller of the three modes of nature and is responsible for the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. His wonderful creative power, *yoga-māyā*, cannot be easily understood even by the masters of *yoga*. That most ancient person, the Personality of Godhead, will alone come to our rescue. What purpose can we serve on His behalf by deliberating on the subject?

—*Bhāg.* 3.16.37

PURPORT

When something is arranged by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one should not be disturbed by it, even if it appears to be a reverse according to one's calculation. For example, sometimes we see that a powerful preacher is killed, or sometimes he is put into difficulty, just as Haridāsa Ṭhākura was. He was a great devotee who came into this material world to execute the will of the Lord by preaching the Lord's glories. But Haridāsa was punished at the hands of the Kazi by being beaten in twenty-two marketplaces. Similarly, Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, and Prahlāda Mahārāja was put through so many tribulations. The Pāṇḍavas, who were direct friends of Kṛṣṇa, lost their kingdom, their wife was insulted, and they had to undergo many severe tribulations. Seeing all these reverses affect devotees, one should not be disturbed; one should simply understand that in these matters there must be some plan of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The *Bhāgavatam*'s conclusion is that a devotee is never disturbed by such reverses. He accepts even reverse conditions as the grace of the Lord. One who continues to serve the Lord even in reverse conditions is assured that he will go back to Godhead, back to the Vaikuṅṭha planets. Lord Brahmā assured the demigods that there was no use in talking about how the disturbing situation of darkness was taking place, since the

actual fact was that it was ordered by the Supreme Lord. Brahmā knew this because he was a great devotee; it was possible for him to understand the plan of the Lord.

Sights of New Vrindaban

Cars pass on the ridge —
where is Bhaktipāda's?

Smoke coming from the chimney
of Bhaktipāda's house.

Sunshine in clouds —
the Palace and near-leafless trees
turn into silhouettes.

Rādhā-Vṛndāvanacandra —
sweet and calm
even in our crisis.

As Bhaktipāda recovers, so do the New Vrindaban devotees. This may be their longest winter as they wait for his return home and recovery. But New Vrindaban devotees are tough; Bhaktipāda has trained them to accept austerities. As the rains, cold, and mud come, they sign requisitions for new boots and joke about the weather. They say there are two kinds of cold at New Vrindaban: outside wet, rainy, and windy cold, and inside sheltered cold. Rādhānātha Swami says he asked Bhaktipāda if he could keep the Deities' doors closed for *ārati* at the old Vrindaban building, because the cold blasts from the temple would be too intense for the Deities. Bhaktipāda said, "No, we are here to preach at New Vrindaban. If someone comes to see the Deities, the doors must be open." Another devotee reminds Rādhānātha Swami, "You used to save half-burned ghee wicks just so you could have butter on your *capātīs*." Rādhānātha Swami replies, "I used to save them and anyone who would serve the Deities in a special way would get a wick to squeeze on their *capātī*."

All devotees here refer to New Vrindaban-*dhāma* as “home.” Umāpati says, “I haven’t been home for a week.” They want to bring Bhaktipāda home.

November 8

Driving in downtown Pittsburg to a hotel. Second day of fasting. When I think of personal comforts, I think how Bhaktipāda has none now. He’s making us all Kṛṣṇa conscious by his austerity. But we are pained that he has to undergo such suffering. What can we do to help? Encourage his workers at New Vrindaban and visit him.

We also think, “Now this may happen to me.” In the material world there is danger at every step. We should not seek comforts here, but strive to be free of them by fully engaging in Prabhupāda’s mission.

We came to this hotel, Weston William Penn, to be near the hospital. Waiting in the car, I regretted being in the midst of the downtown passion, as stylishly dressed men and women passed in the crowded streets. Graham asked, “Do the beings in higher planets look down and see the attempts of people here to enjoy as foolish?” When Graham first began to ask the question, I felt a tinge of annoyance, thinking it to be a neophyte theoretical inquiry. Yet by asking this question he was bringing us all into a better focus of spiritual life. I replied that the beings in higher planets have a much higher standard of enjoyment so they certainly laugh at the attempts for happiness in Pittsburg, but to live on the upper planets may also be considered foolish because they are temporary places. Only the spiritual world has eternal happiness.

Seeing I was annoyed, Graham suggested that we didn’t have to stay in the busy city if I wanted to stay in another place. But no other places are available, so we will accept this false elegance and avoid the big hotel lobby and tolerate the stares and remarks and avoid the TV in our room. After all, we are simply here to be near Bhaktipāda.

Once in our room I set up a small table for Jagannātha and opened the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the section where Lord

Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to Lord Brahmā. There are the wonderful statements by Prabhupāda about the flourishing *tamāla* tree in the courtyard of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. He said it is a sign of *bhūri-puṇya*, or offerings made to the Lord which flourish. The tree was abandoned, but now that it has been offered to Kṛṣṇa it is flourishing, covering an entire corner of the courtyard. Another wonderful purport describes how Lord Viṣṇu creates transcendental desires in the heart of His devotee. “In Vṛndāvana there is a place where there was no temple, but a devotee desired, ‘Let there be a temple, and sevā, devotional service.’ Therefore, what was once an empty corner has now become a place of pilgrimage. Such are the desires of a devotee.”

These statements remind me of Bhaktipāda, who is creating wonderful, flourishing offerings to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the unlikely hills of West Virginia. Such are the desires of a devotee. We are praying to the Supreme Lord to allow this empowered devotee of Prabhupada to recover and go on with his wonderful offerings.

In Pittsburg and Beyond

Waiting in the car
we talk of higher planets,
and the spiritual one.

Tenth Canto cover:
Kṛṣṇa gives His lunch to pals,
while I fast.

Kṛṣṇa is a lotus
and the pink lotus blooms
on the bank of the Yamunā.

From *Bhāgavatam* to *japa*
to Prabhupāda tapes—
no need for TV zoom.

November 9

Rādhānātha Swami, Baladeva, and I read to Bhaktipāda from

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, “Lord Caitanya Visits Vṛndāvana.” Bhaktipāda is resting, wearing the vapor-smoking oxygen mask, while the lights of various medical machines blink red and green and computerized screens show graphs and numbers for heartbeats, etc. Hayagrīva comes in sorrowfully, wearing a baseball cap and denims. I sit at Bhaktipāda’s feet and massage.

Rādhānātha Swami: “It is a minute to minute ordeal.” He says that spiritually it is all in Kṛṣṇa’s hands, but materially it is precarious. Although Bhaktipāda is slowly healing, there could be complications at any moment. We read on.

He sits up for awhile and takes some *prasādam*. He recognizes I am present, and for the first time I talk and tell him of my visit to New Vrindaban, my appreciation for his project. I tell him the devotees get enlivened to hear even the smallest thing he does, such as eating or sitting up.

Hayagrīva is still shocked and asks how Kṛṣṇa has made this happen. I repeat the philosophy we have been discussing for days. Great preachers like Jesus Christ or Haridāsa Ṭhākura sometimes get attacked. Hayagrīva listens with attention but remains disturbed.

Saturday night

At the airport hotel, tired, cold, and feeling heavy from seeing Bhaktipāda. I get irritable that it’s so cold in the room. The heating doesn’t work and I’m waiting for lunch. My disciples are doing all they can to make me comfortable, so I should just calm down and wait, even if it’s cold and lunch is late. Stop complaining; get off the bodily concept of life; chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

November 10, Potomac

By keeping a journal I help myself keep on the track in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Because I want to keep a valuable journal, therefore, the quality of my life should not deteriorate into “bad copy.” After hearing about Bhaktipāda’s critical injuries, I couldn’t go on making my usual diary entries. I had to face—in print—my responsibility. Should I go to New Vrindaban, and if not, why not? Also, I had to either write entries about Bhakti-

pāda or explain why I was going on with other business as usual.

The responsibility of keeping the journal helps me see my way through these decisions. I don't say journal-keeping makes everything easier, but it is an important aid. This may seem like trying to write your way through life, but as long as it is real, as long as I actually commit myself to courses which the journal helps me to chart, then there is no harm in writing my way along. I am not the doer. The Kṛṣṇa conscious standard as given by Śrīla Prabhupāda is the deciding factor.

Decadence occurs if what I write is less important than the grave import of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I want to go beyond official newsletters and resolutions to the heart of personal experience, but in being personal I must stay within crucial Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Govardhana-pūjā

Throwing *prasādam* to eager persons, I lose my heavy heart. Lecturing on *Govardhana-līlā*—talks between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Nanda Mahārāja—before four hundred guests in the temple room, I realize this is my greatest moment. Enmities dissolve: one who puts forth his or her hand for *prasādam* becomes my friend. And whoever hears, swayed by the history of Kṛṣṇa and Govardhana Hill, loses his Māyāvādī attachments for the demi-gods. *Bhakti* wins over; Prabhupāda's Kṛṣṇa book is sublime truth tasted by speaker and conveyed to hearer.

Lord Rāma and Sītā's palms bless the crowding Indians who each light a candle and also the rough, imperfect American Vaiṣṇavas, who at their best are pure devotees who live only for *kīrtana* and for participating in the pastimes of the Lord. If we could only live at this ecstatic height always.

But we sometimes accept less than pure devotional service. We have become *prākṛta-bhaktas*, mixing devotional service with material desires, and that is our tragedy. It is blissful and successful that we live with *Bhakti-devī*, with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā as our worshipable God, but it is tragic that we do not give Them our all (minds, bodies, and words). It is tragic if we give Them

only part and maintain our selfish ways.

Why does this happen? One explanation is that it is very difficult to achieve pure devotional service. Kṛṣṇa only grants it to a few, as He chooses. He grants *prema-bhakti* only to those who hanker with great desire for His lotus feet. Not to everyone.

Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda also says it's easy, provided we follow. Another explanation is that we do not strictly follow the ninefold path beginning with *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam*. Our Sunday guests do not strictly follow, but also we full-time devotees, even while living in a *dhāma*, do not fully participate. We do not strictly follow because we find austerity too difficult and we take instead, sometimes, to the pleasures and comforts of the moment.

Devotees also fail because of lack of faith in superiors and guides. I lament that my presence and leadership in the Potomac community cannot vanquish the selfish and lazy tendencies of my disciples—such as their failure to attend the full morning program in the temple or to work a full day in Kṛṣṇa's service. I am sorry that I cannot lead them or trick them or convince them or pull them into a more vital community spirit of giving all for Kṛṣṇa. I realize the failure is also my own lack of example and inspiration.

But at times—as during the peak of festival preparation and celebration—we become successful.

While lamenting over the materialistic tendencies found even in full-time devotees, I found this encouraging *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport:

... This is explained in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 22.37–39, 41) as follows.

Anyakāmi—a devotee may desire something other than service to the lotus feet of the Lord; *yadi kare kṛṣṇera bhajana*—but if he engages in Lord Kṛṣṇa's service; *nā māgiteha kṛṣṇa tāre dena svacaraṇa*—Kṛṣṇa gives him shelter at His lotus feet, even though he does not aspire for it. *Kṛṣṇa kahe*—the Lord says; *āmā bhaje*—“He is engaged in My service”; *māge viṣaya-sukha*—“but he wants the benefits of material sense gratification.” *Amṛta chāḍī' viṣa māge*: “Such a devotee is like a person who asks for poison instead of nectar.” *Ei baḍa mūrkhā*: “That is his foolishness.” *Āmi—vijña*: “But I

am experienced." *Ei mūrkhē 'viṣaya' kene diba*: "Why should I give such a foolish person the dirty things of material enjoyment?" *Sva-caraṇāmṛta*: "It would be better for Me to give him shelter at My lotus feet." *'Viṣaya' bhulāiba*: "I shall cause him to forget all material desires." *Kāma lāgi' kṛṣṇa bhaje*—if one engages in the service of the Lord for sense gratification; *pāya kṛṣṇa-rase*—the result is that he ultimately gets a taste for serving the lotus feet of the Lord. *Kāma chāḍi' 'dāsa' haite haya abhilāṣe*: He then gives up all material desires and wants to become an eternal servant of the Lord.

—purport, *Bhāg.* 5.19.27

November 11

Dear Śrīla Bhaktipāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

When I saw you at the hospital, you couldn't focus much; it was difficult for you to breathe or to do any acts, your body seemed so wrecked. So it looked, but you are not what you seemed to be. Even in that condition, I was in respectful awe of you, wanting you to favor me with the slightest recognition. I feared displeasing you. I know you are whole; you are simply waiting on Kṛṣṇa's decision: you are in helplessness as His surrendered soul.

The work you have done in Kṛṣṇa consciousness up to date is very great in this world. Your New Vrindaban, complete as it is, and also planned ahead by you, is testimony to your potency for you are blessed by Prabhupāda. Whoever doubts this must be envious or cold-hearted and ignorant.

Let all devotees now come to recognize your wonderful achievements. Any faults your Godbrothers may find in you are like the so-called faulty pockmarks on the moon. The luminous beauty of the moon makes the consideration of the faults useless. So let all devotees now encourage your followers and co-workers at New Vrindaban and assure them of our togetherness in ISKCON. Let us pray to Kṛṣṇa—if we know how to pray—"Please make Bhaktipāda well."

Aspiring to be your servant,
Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

*A Portrait
Bhakta Graham*

1

Blue-eyed Graham
drove the car to Pittsburg:
enlivened by travel
he decides, "I won't go to college."
But yesterday, painting a wall,
he again becomes a restless kid.
Get him on the road!

2

"I'm going home to get my camera
for pictures of the Deities."
His dad, a successful lawyer,
permits him his devotion,
but laments poor Graham
didn't make it in the world.
Still, Graham aspires to that:
"Maybe I'll go back to college."

November 12

Life keeps going like the rushing river. Yesterday we tried to resume our daily walks at Great Falls Park. But while we were away in New Vrindaban the river flooded. The walkway is now closed in both directions. Many peoples' houses were swept away by the flooding of the Potomac River. From the shore we watched the powerful rapids and falls dashing on—the Śiva principle. Anyone daring to step down into it will be swept to destruction.

I shouldn't get swept up in the personal currents, but today I have to talk with a heavy devotee who wants me to do things his way. I have to tell him, however, to take his complaints to our zonal committee. And another Godbrother says I should be replaced. To some degree it is our duty to enter into these torrents or currents. For example, how can we avoid the anticultists when they submit their million-dollar court cases against us and

drag us into it? We have declared war on Māyā, so now we cannot ask her not to fight back to protect her illusory realm.

But I can avoid being swept into the wrong mentality, the worrying and fear and doubt. What if we lose one of our valuable ISKCON properties in a court case? Is it possible? And what if some of my disagreeing Godbrothers remain dissatisfied with me and persist in complaining against me? What if the worst things happen? Yet there is ultimately nothing to fear because we cannot lose our original Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We also have to realize it's that way with Bhaktipāda; he and his work cannot be vanquished.

It is easier to encourage others in their losses, but when it is your turn you are worried. You are even worried about how it will look socially. If I am defeated or the demons' attack against me seems successful even temporarily, Godbrothers may criticize, "He is getting his just reward." But a devotee who is dear to Kṛṣṇa is not disturbed by fame or infamy. He is always equipoised. These important characteristics of a *sthita-dhī muni*, one fixed in steady intelligence, are brought out in *Bhagavad-gītā*. We have to read the *Gītā* and live it. Then we will not get swept up by the material passions.

Janma's Japa

Janma's deliberate *japa*
is an inspiration;
he paces growling, uttering.

Round and round the temple, Janma's *japa*.

Thick eyeglasses,
strong faithful body,
the promise of Kṛṣṇa
in his heart
absolute.

Around again,
pushing out the *mantras*

early in the morning.

I have to retire
and come out again;
he just keeps going strong.

Like a waterfall, a truck,
like Kṛṣṇa's promise, Janma's *japa*.

He doesn't fall asleep
sitting against the wall.
He's got his problems
but his *japa* is together.

November 13

Dear Lord Jagannātha, I feel tired and weak, and when that happens my nerves get irritable. But I should calm down, knowing on this fast day that I will not eat food, knowing that this is good for me, knowing my disciples are traveling to far places for fund-raising—and what am I doing as equivalent penance to help them, knowing Bhaktipāda is suffering severe austerities on behalf of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and his followers at New Vrindaban are still in shock; knowing that millionaires visit the Deity but don't give much money to the Kṛṣṇa temple; and knowing I have to work harder for Kṛṣṇa.

The essential reason to write seems distant to me right now—a desire and hope to commune with others, and a joy in self-expression. That urge to write is rare and worthwhile; give vent to it when it comes.

Today is the twelfth anniversary of the installation of Washington, D.C.'s Rādhā-Madana-mohana. Maṇḍaleśvara asks, "What's the difference between a statue of Kṛṣṇa and the installed Deity?" "We promise to serve Him," I explain, "when He appears in the Deity, and that is why He is different than an uninstalled statue whom no one has promised to serve. We agree to render service and Kṛṣṇa agrees to accept the services in His Deity form." You have to serve a Deity to know this.

Jagannātha Darśana

I like to hold Them
 and feel Them warm
 after the night's chill
 as I pour on Their bath.
 They look nice
 with colorful dress,
 standing in a row
 smiling in a way
 unattainable to me.
 Lords of the universe,
 I bow down to You.

T. dāsa really yelled at me, but that's natural; he is upset thinking that a Godbrother is moving in on his territory. He has his side of the story also. . . . "Come present your side at the next zonal committee meeting."

I read the *Bhagavad-gītā* for half an hour and it was well worth it, to say the least. I gained reassurance for being steadfast, for not being swayed by the outer events of the world. Unless one is Kṛṣṇa conscious, he will fall down into sense gratification. Prabhupāda gives the example of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa who engaged all his senses in the service of the Lord. Otherwise the agitated senses will drag us down. And Haridāsa Ṭhākura succeeded by chanting the holy name. The best example is the tortoise who pulls in his senses when he is not using them.

Maṇḍaleśvara's here, but for the second day in a row I couldn't meet with him—the emergency phone call came from an angry Prabhu. Maybe tomorrow we'll read together.

*Three Portraits**Baladeva*

Up all night Halloween
 with shotgun and bandolier,
 "No funny business. It was just me,
 the rain and Kṛṣṇa."

A Pūjārī

He has been serving for years;
with tattooed wrist,
gripping, but dedicated.

Prāṇadā

Thin, ill, troubled, devoted.
"She has the *īśvara-bhāva*,"
her husband says,
the *kṣatriya* spirit
to take on problems.
Sign on her door:
"Book marathon—do not disturb."

November 14

BACKYARD NOTES

The big planes go overhead almost without let-up.

I should be satisfied if there is only a small patch of solitary woods.

A long way to go still in reversing the process from health cleansing to normal behavior.

The big trees now have almost no leaves at all.

The fat boy across the street just returned home in his silver jeep, playing loud pop-rock on his car radio, wearing a white T-shirt, his whole torso bulging out in fat.

Everyone is trying to express his own philosophy. We have the best, the most hopeful. But people are afraid that we claim too much. Some prefer the Buddha's instruction that what he said was neither true nor untrue. They like voidness and oneness. So many different teachings and nonteachings and ways of life. But we have the best.

Last leaves fall with a crumpled noise; they are more like shriveled things than leaves. And still more woods are being cleared by heavy construction vehicles. One day, however, there will be a last airplane. It is hard to imagine now, because everything seems so real. But is anything permanent even now? Do we know anyone who doesn't die? The present moment is transformed by Māyā's power so that it seems real (eternal) and

all that there is. But there will be a last plane, and we will go on to another life. There is no doubt of it. The only thing in question is where we go. And the only true purpose is to try and attain the eternal life of bliss and knowledge. That we cannot understand or attain by loitering in the here and now trying to enjoy. Not by busy work or attaining the “for senators only” parking lot. Not by speculation on the void. Only by association with a pure devotee.

Crumpled leaves,
not-so-distant engines . . .
the *Gītā* waiting in my room.

“No intellect,” the poet says,
“just things.”
All right, then, Kṛṣṇa conscious things:
the perfect book,
the senses in His service,
japa beads,
the prayer.

Two Portraits
Big Son of Hari

1

Six-foot-nine, three hundred pounds,
sometimes violent.
His senses also
violent against him.
With the burden of a sick wife
& carrying his crying daughter;
surrendered to Hari.
A good man to have
on your side
in a fight.

2

He's open about his sin:
“When just a teenager

I used to ride my bike
from Jersey to Times Square's porno shops."

Sometimes in *kīrtanas*
he leaps, and his head
almost touches
the high chandeliers.

Big son of Hari,
always tries again.

Śakti dāsa

His clothes are neat, he's punctual
in chanting he sits upright,
but everyone knows
he doesn't like
to do the needful.
"My *guru* said
I should paint."

Unsundered artist,
but he too takes shelter
in the *dhāma*.

PLEASURES OF THE DAY

Early morning despite chill, rising for devotional service. The warm shower water is nice, but then even more the chill of the cold shower and knowing it is good for renunciation and health. Dressing warmly and then going into the next room; knowing I am up before the others.

Approaching the Deity of Jagannātha and setting up the little table where I will bathe Them; the brief ceremony of His bathing and dressing. Beginning *brāhma-muhūrta* *japa* in the dim-lit room—the comfort and peace, spiritual pleasure in reciting Kṛṣṇa's name; shelter under the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and communion with Prabhupāda through his order; the satisfaction of the rounds accumulating.

Feeling well enough to go to *maṅgala-ārati*. Taking my place as preceptor of devotees here.

Bowing down before the temple Deities. Sitting to view Them while the *kīrtana* starts, and joining in the *kīrtana*.

Almost every act is pleasurable. There is also sadness that I do not feel it more deeply and purely, yet it is undeniable that this life is happy and this is what I want. I want to live with devotees and rise early and see Kṛṣṇa Deities all my life, and I am doing that now, so it is a source of happiness.

Similarly, the *tulasī* songs, the beginning of group *japa* . . . as Prabhupāda said, “It is all recreation; you cannot think of a part of our *bhakti-yoga* program and say this is not likeable.”

Problems, troubles, disagreements, frustration that the community is not up to standard, opposition from the non-devotees—these too are a part of the satisfaction of being a preacher. We cannot do without it. Just today, for example, we hear that the teenage son of a loose devotee living here was arrested last night for attempting to burglarize nearby stores at Potomac Village. It will be in tomorrow’s newspaper and our temple will suffer local ill repute (the last thing we need here). It hurts to hear it. But if we did not come here to preach (and thus sometimes take in persons who are still sinful), then there would be no chance of this infamy. But we have taken that risk for spreading Kṛṣṇa’s message. So when the risk turns into danger and bad newspaper articles and neighbors thinking we are criminals—what can be done? The troubles are coming because we are attempting to preach. As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura said, “Trouble encountered in the course of Your service I will consider a great happiness.”

The taste of food offered to the Lord—different and better than the taste of ordinary food. It is not mixed with sin, but with Kṛṣṇa’s blessings. These are not abstractions. Ordinary food is not the same, just as ordinary hearing is not the same. We hear the singing of the holy name, we see the form of God, and we know it is soothing and liberating.

During the early morning I feel happy anticipating that at eight A.M. I will come to my desk and try writing Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. Then when I come to do it, it is work, but absorbing, pleasurable work: my service. Throughout the day the happiness continues, finding ways to stay engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

The righteousness of these acts—knowing we are being saved from karmic reactions, staying under the shelter of Prabhupāda. We fall short, but we stay in his protection.

The fine pleasure of reading the books and paying attention to His words. Saturated with Kṛṣṇa thought—Prabhupāda's purports. Happiness comes by staying always engaged in service to Kṛṣṇa, and that is the way to control the mind and senses. Otherwise we would be like animals.

We pray to remain in this way, happy to be servants of the Supreme Lord's pure devotee.

November 15

At my request, Dr. Sarma is giving a series of formal lectures covering the syllabus of nature cure. Several of us are attending and recording them. Today he will speak on mind and health, and he asked me to comment at the end. Dr. Sarma's grandfather, Laksmana Sarma, in his book, *Practical Nature Cure*, wrote nicely about mind and health, emphasizing that the mind has to be in a state of "self-surrender to God," and then only the rewards of nature cure can take place. Neither does he believe in praying to God for faith-healing cures. "This prayer is suited to worldly-minded, unenlightened men." In other words, one should surrender to the will of God.

In my case, I tried to stay surrendered to Kṛṣṇa's will when there seemed to be no cure for the headaches, but now I take it that Kṛṣṇa has sent a very good system of natural hygiene for me to get better. God helps those who help themselves. Since Kṛṣṇa has sent me a means to health, so I must cooperate with Him by carrying out the practical part of the teaching, which is in some ways a penance for my previous wrong conduct. Some of the physiological sins, poor health habits of eating and living. And also there are karmic misdeeds.

Regarding the integration of nature cure and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we mainly have to recognize that the power behind life referred to by the Sarmas is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It should not be left that "nature" is itself a curing agent without need of medicine or that there is a

“power behind life” that cures or that there is “God” who has given us a natural cure system. But God should be understood as Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is *rāja-vidyā*, or the supreme knowledge.

We Kṛṣṇa conscious students, by Prabhupāda’s grace, are embracing the topmost knowledge, *rāja-vidyā*, even though we are lacking in knowledge of its details. I take it that nature cure teachings are the details of healthful living, just as there are so many detailed aspects of life given in the *Vedas* which we are still trying to learn and which we are aspiring to follow. We have been given the most important knowledge first, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, and this is quite sufficient. But because Prabhupāda has made us ambitious to do active service in Lord Caitanya’s movement, we are now anxious to find out the most healthful state, and we are willing to practice the austerities required. And some of us are also ready to give up our superstitions about the need for allopathic medicines and treatments.

Since mind is connected to health, the ideal state of the mind is to be at peace by accepting Kṛṣṇa as the supreme controller, the supreme friend, and the object of all sacrifices. (Bg. 5.29) This is also stated in the Bg. 2.66: “One who is not connected with the Supreme [in Kṛṣṇa consciousness] can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?” In the purport to this verse, Prabhupāda writes, “Therefore if one is not in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there cannot be a final goal for the mind. Disturbance is due to want of an ultimate goal, and when one is certain that Kṛṣṇa is the enjoyer, proprietor and friend of everyone and everything, then one can, with a steady mind, bring about peace.” So the mind in health means the mind peaceful in surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Portraits

Rāya Kṛṣṇa (“Roy Boy”)

After a broken home,
and eight years of T.M.,
he came to ISKCON in '76—
now eight years selling books in the lots.

Gray hair with *śikha*,
 odd bachelor collector—
 his antique desk and bookshelves
 matching chair, trunk of tapes,
 private room filled with knickknacks.
 Once he went out dressed like a clown.

A joyous dancer
 but his steps are slowing,
 he's 40 and unhappy:
 "I've got no confidential friends."
 He's kind to new men,
 but his mind is like a bucking mule.

"Maybe a new career for me?
 Be a *gurukula* teacher?
 Work with a *sannyāsī*?
 Stay in my *guru's* zone?
 Right now I don't have much
 desire to be a devotee."

Yet of him, Gurudeva said,
 "He is one of those humble devotees
 who'll go back to Godhead in this lifetime."

It was getting quite dark and cold while Baladeva and I were walking. He asked me how to cope philosophically with the fact that he may be implicated in some of the upcoming legal cases. I advised he follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's example in the 1977 New York brainwashing case. Prabhupāda saw it as an opportunity to preach. He acted purely and philosophically, asserting that a devotee is not wrong to give others spiritual life. His emphasis was more on pure preaching rather than technical legal maneuvers.

I also advised Baladeva that if it gets difficult—getting interrogated by a lawyer, trying to figure out strategies, facing the attacks—then we have to resort even more to dependence on Kṛṣṇa. Great devotees in the past, as reported in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, give us their exemplary behavior.

We should act within the law and then preach as strongly as possible that Kṛṣṇa conscious practices are not devious but are beneficial to everyone. And if in the imperfect court of justice we suffer reverses, we simply have to accept things as Kṛṣṇa's mercy, sustain whatever losses occur, and go on making all dedicated effort to spread the holy name. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, "In pushing on our *saṅkīrtana* movement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we might have to face difficult days, but we should always follow in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and do the needful according to the time and circumstance." Lord Caitanya's example was not to accept the Kazi's restriction of *saṅkīrtana*, and yet when He got the opportunity to meet with the Kazi, he was "thoroughly peaceful, sober, and unagitated."

*A Portrait
Datta dāsa Brahmācārī*

State College neo-buddhist,
M.A. scholar in English Lit.,
gradually he came to Kṛṣṇa:
"I'll read all the books,
but I won't *join*!"
He argued with Stambha dāsa
but when he saw Sureśvara dance,
jumping and soaring in spiritual bliss,
he was mind-blown, defeated.

Now Datta dances wildly,
and reads and edits well.
In his *brahmācārī* briefcase:
the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*,
a notepad for memorizing *śloka*s,
a clip-on ISKCON ID badge,
a pad entitled, "Different Lights"
and news magazines.

A good, feisty intellect
for Kṛṣṇa's side.

November 16, Eighth anniversary of the disappearance
of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

I know I failed to do the best I could while he was present, and I failed to share the last pastimes when he offered the most intimate exchanges, and since his departure my service is somewhat unconscious—but I’m going on, confident in his *vāṇī*. If there is any hope for me, it is in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings.

He says that personal association (*vapuḥ*) isn’t as important as the eternal instructions. He is not here now in his physical presence as in the old days, and neither can we say that it is wrong that he has departed. It is his will and Kṛṣṇa’s will. So we have to be happy in the *vāṇī*. But we lament that we don’t follow him well enough.

This year I’m not in tears for the lack of *vapuḥ*. I feel happy that I am following his teachings. Of course, if he were here, he would find me off the track and immediately straighten me out, but it is so comforting to be at least counted among his followers that I cannot help but feel deep well-being and gratefulness to him.

Another point: I’ve got some good reputation, and that may also work against me. I have a tendency for being smug and complacent. I could go on and on berating my poor relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, but it doesn’t seem so useful to do that. Where will it get me? Let me be positive and increase everything, even if I have to go gradually. And let me bind myself to his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

While Kṛṣṇa Gopāla gave the lecture this morning, I was guarded and smug. He said the right *paramparā* things about Prabhupāda, and he was also friendly to me and my disciples, saying that they had a spiritual master who is a bona fide follower of Prabhupāda. He said that as years pass, he finds it more painful as he realizes that Prabhupāda’s personal presence is gone. I was hearing him with a somewhat know-it-all air. The room was cold, my body was cold, my heart is cold.

After the class, Gītā-nāgarī dāsa asked a question: “Which is

superior, to cry for Śrīla Prabhupāda or not?" Vijitātmā gave the answer by telling a pastime from *The Nectar of Devotion*. When mother Yaśodā was crying over the absence of Kṛṣṇa, she reprimanded Nanda for not crying. He told her, don't be foolish, Kṛṣṇa is right here. Don't you see Him? This *līlā* shows both forms of intense feeling for Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā crying, and Nanda not crying because he sees Kṛṣṇa is in every way still present. Prabhupāda is present, and yet absent.

I suspect that I am getting away with too much freedom, doing what I want to do in devotional service. Many of us may be guilty of that. But who is there to correct us? Everyone may say he knows what Prabhupāda wants. All right, let us get together and agree on the main principles of his way.

I just read one 26 Second Avenue memory. Late at night, Prabhupāda allowed me to go into his front room. I was typing there in his presence while he ate his puffed rice. He looked over at me and his eyes widened. I thought maybe he liked the fact that I was still up late at night working on his behalf.

*Guru of the universe,
a puppy at his feet.*

Typing
my constant prayer:
please accept me.

The here and now predominates. *Today* we decorated the *vyāsāsana*, and we speak of him and dance before him. We are preparing *today's* feast, getting ready for the large gathering of congregational guests, organizing a *saṅkīrtana* marathon. . . . To remember the past is a lingering sensation, but the immediate work on his behalf is an ongoing *now*, and it demands full dedication. My disciples should also have it. They are working directly in his movement and they know it. If it weren't for Prabhupāda, none of us would be here today. He is like the life-breath in our bodies. But we can learn to breathe better and deeper.

PRABHUPĀDA NECTAR
Little Drops of Nectar

1

One time Prabhupāda
 came to save this world.

2

One time Prabhupāda
 returned to his abode.

3

One time . . .
 when will we see him again?

In his morning class Kṛṣṇa Gopāla said that if we develop love for our spiritual master, that will be a main impetus for us to return back to the spiritual world. Since Śrīla Prabhupāda is with Kṛṣṇa, and since we cannot claim direct love for Kṛṣṇa, therefore our attraction and longing to rejoin Śrīla Prabhupāda will bring us back to Godhead.

This reminds me of the recurring dreams I have of being detained in the material world. Last night I dreamt I was waiting for a Brooklyn Dodger baseball game to begin, but the managers kept delaying it until it turned into night. In these dreams I have a vague sense of identity as a devotee, but usually there's no chanting, and I am entangled in misadventures, detained and threatened. I analyze these dreams as my inability to break away from the material world of *saṁsāra*, although it is revealed to me as dangerous and absurd. Although I am enlisted in devotional life, still I cannot break free.

I must gain the greater impetus to rejoin with Prabhupāda. But I have to show him more that I wish to be with him to serve him. That I can do by intensifying my desire. I should welcome austerities more. Why be afraid of what ills may befall me in this life, as long as I am serving him? If I try to make myself comfortable, and thereby in any way reduce my active daily service to Prabhupāda, that will be another way of detaining myself. And

to detain oneself means to go on suffering the threefold miseries of life.

I have a long way to go, and therefore I need the time and health to prosecute my duties. But what I need most is increased love for Prabhupāda and willingness to serve him. Therefore I pray to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, please direct me. I'm slow and I need you to take me in hand. I want to be your soldier, but I've yet to get out of this deeply rooted concept of the body as the self and the desire for bodily and mental comforts. Please free me to be your devotee.

Another memory, written in a book: I was sitting on the curb of Second Avenue, outside the storefront, after a morning lecture by Prabhupāda, in the first days of my meeting him. I was looking down the Avenue, loitering and wondering what to do—a dangerous moment. Prabhupāda sent someone out to get me. He must have seen me from inside when he was talking with some of the boys. I was happy to go at his call. This was in the days when I especially craved attention. I never stopped craving it but later I was enough fixed by him that I could do my service even without it. But in the early days, I didn't decide to surrender to the vows until he brought me close with personal care.

He was still sitting on his dais and he said, "We are having a feast and I'm inviting you to come this afternoon. Do you have an engagement at work or can you come?"

Just before I dove
you caught me
in your glance.

Your sweetrice
saved me.

November 18, 4 A.M., Baltimore, Jaya Gaurasundara's house

We have come here to do a letter-writing marathon. I have months-old unanswered letters. This morning, after dictating

the first dozen letters, I felt a sweet reciprocation. Although it is not a substitute to personal association, in some cases letter writing is all we have for long periods of time. Genuine instructions can be given and received. I should not forget how vital Prabhupāda's letters were, and how he gave essential guidance in this way. His personal association was an ecstatic, special time which only occurred on a few occasions a year.

Writing letters is not front-line preaching, but as I sit alone in a room in my disciple's house, I let the letters reach out. But to write effective letters to devotees, one has to be a credible devotee-preacher. How can we advise someone to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books or chant with attention or go out and preach unless we do it? Do we cross our fingers and think, "I'll tell him to do what I should do: do as I say, don't do as I do"? There may be a degree of this—teaching by pointing to an ideal which the teacher himself has not reached—but there must be substance both in the teaching and in living, or the letter writing is a useless flurry of dictating, typewriting, and mailing out. There must be authorized instructions from an authorized practitioner.

Around 6 P.M., after more than fifty letters, my vision starts to blur. It is important service and I will continue it, but there is a point of overdose.

We went out to go to a park for walking but got caught in the rush-hour traffic before we could reach a park. Swept up in the madness, we trailed the red stoplights of the cars in front of us and faced the glaring headlights of the oncoming cars. On both sides, wherever we looked all the ground was paved and constructed into shopping mall suburbia where the teenagers roamed with nothing to do and their *karmī* parents strained homeward, imprisoned in their tin cars. This plunge into American hell took place within three minutes on the way to a sylvan park. We tried to retreat from it but went the wrong way on a one-way street and got heavy honks from passing car drivers. Finally we got away and found an empty baseball field to walk on before it got too late.

Baladeva said I am now halfway through the backlog of letters and he suggested that I complete it by staying on at

Jaya Gaurasundara's house for another day.

Back at their house, Jaya Gaurasundara had arrived home from work, still wearing his big-knotted tie, formal blue shirt, suit pants, but barefoot, standing and playing *karatālas* beside his wife who stood, dressed in her *sārī*, facing their small golden Rādhā-Govinda Deities and their shiny gold Bāla-Gopāla Deity. Jaya Gaurasundara and Kaumodakī dāsī are Gujaratis, now ISKCON devotees, born into Vaiṣṇavism and fortunate enough to accept Prabhupāda's teachings. I sat down with them on the rug, and after they completed their *ārati*, I led a Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*. I had been hoping I would be able to enter their Kṛṣṇa conscious family warmth in this way, by simple chanting. During this visit I am not giving them much *guru*-instruction or association, but I am happily holed up within a room batting out letter replies. But maybe tonight we can read *Bhāgavatam* together in front of Rādhā-Govinda.

November 19

TRYING TO REMEMBER 1966 FOR MY PURIFICATION

I had gradually saved six hundred dollars from my welfare job. My purpose was to use it for a vacation in solitude on a green island which I imagined somewhere in Eastern Canada. It was inspiration to meditate on my goal, even while I visited the Lower East Side welfare clients. But after meeting and hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda, my conscience prompted me to give him the money. So I withdrew the cash from the bank and went one day when he was alone in his room. "This is my life savings," I said, and shyly handed it to him while he sat at his low desk. Prabhupāda smiled, openly glad to receive the donation. But when I sat down opposite him, his demeanor had suddenly changed. He looked at me sternly, with a penetrating glance. He didn't say anything, but I seemed to hear him say, "Don't be proud that you have given me this money. It is not so wonderful. Now you must actually surrender everything to Lord Kṛṣṇa."

My life saved,
I gave him

my unused ticket to hell.

I sat, smiled
and thought
it's easy.

In his reprimanding eyes:
my naked soul,
and a glimpse at pure love.

I try now to remember
the sudden demand
from his eyes.

November 20, 3:00 A.M., Jaya Gaurasundara's house

After the second day's letter writing came eyeaches and headaches, and with that, an irritable mood, depressed. I thought, "Still aches? Why hasn't all illness gone away? People want to meet with me. What if I'm not up to my tasks? How will others understand that after all these months I am still not ready?"

On an evening walk around the baseball lot, I explained this restless discontent to Baladeva. He suggested that my condition is simply the way it is: I might be sixty percent or whatever percent improved, and so I and others just have to accept that this is the way it is.

"Like with Bhaktipāda," he said, "they don't know if he will come back fifty percent or eighty percent. They were almost down to zero."

"He almost died."

"Two percent of you or Bhaktipāda," said Baladeva, "is worth a hundred percent of me."

Talking with him helped me realize I can't expect to be a hundred percent well. If others are displeased with me, there's not much I can do. For now I have two more months of intensive therapy, including fasting, and then in January I am supposed to gradually renormalize. Then we will see how much I can do.

Everyone, including myself, has to accept whatever I can do. At least writing books is still intact; it doesn't produce so many headaches.

Waking this morning, I recall the letters I wrote and how they contain Śrīla Prabhupāda's valuable messages, mostly for my disciples who are waiting to hear from me. The headaches are the price I had to pay for it, but I got something done—one hundred-forty letters. I am only gradually understanding: I am meant to work and serve others in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. My intelligence should be used to do this in the best way, with neither passionate over-endeavor, nor lazy escapism.

MEDITATION ON MEMORIES OF PRABHUPĀDA

One of the first times I visited Prabhupāda in his 26 Second Avenue room was when I went to buy the three-volume set of First Canto *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I went as a spiritual seeker, an avid book-reader, and as one who had already attended with keen interest a few of Swamiji's evening lectures and *kīrtanas*. I went for the books. I was willing to purchase them from one of his representatives in the storefront, but the boys I found there told me to go up and see the Swamiji. "He has the books."

Sitting, smiling at ease, Prabhupāda was very attractive. He seemed strong and healthy; when he smiled, all his teeth were intact and his nostrils flared aristocratically. His face was full and powerful. He was wearing a *khādī dhotī*, and he sat cross-legged, his smooth-skinned legs partly exposed. He wore no shirt, but the upper part of his body was wrapped with a *khādī* cloth shawl. His limbs were quite slender, but he had a protruding belly.

"These are commentaries from the scriptures?" I asked. Prabhupāda said yes. Six dollars each. I bought them from his own hand. He had no representative: he was author, *guru*, bookseller.

"Sit down," he said. His tone was heavy. He was inviting me to join the others sitting and hearing from him. But I was too much in momentum, on a lunch hour from the office. My mind and body were programmed with the *karmī* rhythm. "I have to

go," I said, and started for the door. What struck me was Prabhupāda's very pleasant and surprised smile even as I ran out on him. Later I thought he may have liked the fact that at least I was active and employed. He must have already known that I would eventually come back and "sit down." He would gather me in later, and in the meantime, although running off in illusion, I was carrying the three volumes. He was glad to see me go like that.

Book buying:
the price is high
but I want them.

Relaxed, philosophical
Swamiji appears
as if he'll never leave.

"Sit down."
I can't—
but the books.

Walking fast,
through city streets
with three big books.

November 21

FIRST MEMORIES OF PRABHUPĀDA

I can't say I really *remember* now those first days and nights with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I know they happened as I described them because I began repeating them while they were still vivid in my mind and senses. Now I look back and try to savor them. Of course, the main force of my accumulated association with Prabhupāda is his instructions and orders, and they form the unforgettable direction to my life.

So why am I after 1966 moments? Because as Prabhupāda used to say, "Those were happy days."

My first question asked after his lecture:

Prabhupāda had invited questions, and Howard asked why

Prabhupāda described Lord Buddha as an atheist. I also raised my hand. Prabhupāda recognized me and I began speaking in a roundabout manner by first apologizing that my question was not very clear. I finally got it out: “Is misery eternal?” I was thinking of a statement I had read in the collected letters of Van Gogh. Prabhupāda replied by first describing that there is no end to misery in the material world. He said that if a person breaks his arm and goes into the hospital and gets it repaired, his medical treatment will not prevent him from breaking another limb or becoming ill and suffering in another way. Suffering goes on continually. But then Prabhupāda described a state—Kṛṣṇa consciousness—where one could attain relief from all misery. That completely spiritual state of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is eternal. I received Prabhupāda’s reply and did not argue. I was satisfied.

My bare bulb apartment,
your bare bulb temple:
how different!

A young LSD man
asks about death:
Do you know?

I hear your words
beyond bones and madness:
eternal bliss and knowledge.

First question I asked alone with him in his room:

“Swamiji, is there a level in spiritual advancement one can make from which he doesn’t fall back?”

“Yes.” His one-word reply left a great impression on me. It wasn’t a “yes” anyone could have uttered. From that moment I was convinced there was real spiritual life—a steady transcendental platform—and I was convinced Prabhupāda had achieved it. After his lectures, Prabhupāda used to say (refer-

ring to Kṛṣṇa consciousness), “It is such a nice thing,” and he would urge us to practice it. I remember thinking that whatever that nice thing is which he has achieved, I want to achieve it also.

Trying to do Nothing
alone in a sterile room,
so-called Lao Tzu follower.

Keeping clean
two weeks at a time
then ferry to Manhattan.

Gold-skinned father,
sunlight pouring in:
Yes there is.

November 22, 5:30 P.M., Potomac, Backyard Notes

The doctor is pushing us to cancel our December tour to Boston and to Philadelphia. He says, and I agree, that we should practice the health regimen more strictly in these last months, learn how to do it on our own, and get as well as possible before going to India. Recent headaches make it evident that I am not practicing everything I should. But do we have to cancel the tour? Dr. Sarma is partly motivated by the fact that his wife just had a baby and so it's hard for him to travel. We have to sort out the pros and cons.

Everything we do should be motivated by the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa and *guru* in the best way. There I go with that expression again—what I or we *should do*. But is it wrong to wish for an ideal state or to pronounce what is the best course of action? No. We are not relativists. We know what we should do. We are committed to the śāstric path. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*: “Follow the path of the ācāryas.” We should do, we must do. It's not wrong to give reminders of this.

Awareness of devotional service includes awareness that death will come soon. If we don't feel the nearness of death

emotionally, then we must know it intellectually. Or else we miss the special chance of human life. This is an obvious fact, and we have it on the word of higher authority.

I have started hearing more *śāstra*, new tapes made by my disciples reading from Fourth Canto *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In one purport Śrīla Prabhupāda glorifies the *Bhāgavatam* and states that if we take great pleasure in constantly hearing its message, then we shall surely go back to Godhead. I hadn't been hearing very extensively on a daily basis, and as I reentered the *Bhāgavatam*, I felt some intellectual twinges of doubt. But Śrīla Prabhupāda addressed my very doubts by denouncing the atheists and Māyāvādīs who think śāstric history is mythology. They're not ordinary history as told in the newspapers, but the Purāṇic accounts are true. Dhruva Mahārāja killing the Yakṣas. The narrations go on and on, and I try to retain it for my own future lectures, but the main impression is to hear in the immediate moment. At least for these moments I'm absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, and so I should go on with it as much as possible.

Sky darkening in the backyard, nature moving to a winter landscape. Three more *japa* rounds tonight; writing with gloves on.

THE FIRST TIME I BOWED DOWN

The devotees took lunch with Prabhupāda from twelve to one and that was my lunch hour also. But one day the boss asked me to stay in the office until one o'clock. I didn't know how much it meant to me until they said I couldn't go.

It was the first time I ever phoned Swamiji. "This is Steve," I said. "Do you remember me?" He said yes. I asked if he could please save lunch for me.

Bowing to the rice,
my head at your feet,
just you and I.

We are making a compromise with the doctor. We will still visit Boston and Philadelphia, but only for a few days (to Boston

for the Vyāsa-pūjā on December 8, and to Philly for a Christmas day party). Otherwise, for all of December and January I plan to stay at Gītā-nāgarī. Having left Gītā-nāgarī abruptly two months ago to come here, now I plan to suddenly leave here for there. Gītā-nāgarī has an environment we can control more in order to practice the last two months of the regimen, and the doctor can stay comfortably in one place. Winter in the woods; vigorous nature cure.

A LETTER PORTRAIT

Dear Nārāyaṇa-kavaca,

Please accept my blessings.

Where are you? I know, you are out getting sales spots for the devotees and one for yourself. It's Prabhupāda marathon time. But we hardly see you. You come back to the temple, and then you're out again, suddenly gone to Tampa, Chicago. . . .

When you're away, they complain to me in their anxiety. They say, "Even when he's here he's not here." They mean you don't tend enough to domestic details of temple life, yet you are the temple president. And they say you work everyone too hard, you expect too much. You're losing respect here, so come back and do it right.

I can hear your replies. "They don't remember what this place was like when they called me in. Now that things are running they criticize and forget." It's not easy being taskmaster. They get mean with you and sometimes even make you cry: "I'm only human." But they say, "We know he works hard, he's a good surrendered disciple, but—"

You are the money man. We can turn to you in a pinch. At least you have encouraging words and many plans. You seem to know the pulse of things: you're progressive. It's a fact you have done worthy deeds. When we first inherited an odd zone composed of Gītā-nāgarī (a farm with a big overhead and no income power), plus little Baltimore, you were the hero of a collecting party which supported Gītā-nāgarī. Those are your legendary days—traveling parties of men and women. Once you set up a rally in a national park and I flew out to be with the devotees,

and one year at Christmas, at a cold motel in Chicago, I met with devotees from all over the Mid-West.

This Potomac-*dhāma* is your greatest challenge yet. So I'm asking you to stick it out, even though you're not so popular and your critics are ever ready.

It's also a fact that my G.B.C. Godbrothers respect you: "He's one of Gurupāda's leading men." And Gurudeva thinks you can make it through spiritual life without getting married again.

I sympathize, but I have to demand success: big results from the marathon, and a smooth-running temple. Is it too much to ask?

GETTING READY TO SAY A TEMPORARY GOODBYE TO POTOMAC-DHĀMA

It will not be a very ceremonious good-bye. The day after tomorrow we will pack up and the Olds 98 will be purring outside the door only a few feet away and I'll get in. If it's anything like today, it will be cold and gray and not many devotees will be around (many have gone to different cities for the marathon). And we'll just pull out. (I remember Prabhupāda leaving one temple. On his way out of his room he stopped before a large photo of a Kṛṣṇa Deity and placed his head right up against it at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. I thought that was a perfect departure for a pure devotee *sannyāsī*.)

What about my promise to dedicate myself here, to save Rādhā-Madana-mohana from being moved, to stay and develop the community and congregation and the dream to build a great temple? What about Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami saying it was right for me to come here, since Gītā-nāgarī was already being nicely developed by Paramānanda Prabhu? None of these concepts have to be rejected. I'm going for health; I'll be back. It is not so ideal here for recuperation. I have two months more of strict practice, when the regimen requires full attention. In any case, I will probably travel more next year, but I do intend to keep coming back here as home-base. Yet Nārāyaṇa-kavaca, Nāgarāja, Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana, Janmāṣṭamī, and company will have to go on with it themselves. For two months I tried and maybe helped in

some ways, though there are no dramatic results. It has to be held together and continued.

Good-bye for awhile, Rādhā-Madana-mohana. I cannot claim that I am attached to any Kṛṣṇa Deity. I cannot claim love for my own traveling deities of Lord Jagannātha, or a strong attraction to the holy name. But Rādhā-Madana-mohana, You've been kind to allow me to stay here and glimpse into Your beautiful pastimes. Beside You on the wide altar I've also seen the beauty and youthful majesty of Their Lordships Sītā-Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān. At least on certain occasions and moments I've beheld a small glimpse of the actual *darśana* of Sītā-Rāma. And similarly, Gaura-Nitāi have manifested to my mind and heart and eyes the special mercy of Their meaning in this world as They raise Their arms and hands in benediction, inviting us to chant the holy names, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The devotees are few here and their reputation is that a few of them work very hard and others are conditional. But in any case they gather in the temple hall each morning and behold these gorgeous *arcā-vigrahas*. All glories to the Deities of New Hastināpura, and all glories to the *dhāma* which has great potential with its green lawns, blossoming spring and summer gardens, and its acres of tall trees on a hill. It is pleasantly located and when developed, should attract many persons to come and at least spend some hours here sitting at a picnic table, eating *prasādam* from the kitchen, and talking about spiritual life with the residents. There's a wonderful potential for preaching to congregational masses. The Indian community turns out in good numbers each Sunday, especially when we hold elaborate festivals.

I could also make a list of the inadequacies in the morale and facilities. It is sometimes disheartening and disgusting. Living facilities are especially poor and we are in dire need of buildings for *grhasthas* living here. And the spiritual standard, the lack of full attendance at the morning program, the lack of money, the quarreling among devotees . . . these can reach alarming proportions. And that is why I have come here, to quell some of the discontent.

And yet now I am making my temporary good-bye. I promise to come back, if Kṛṣṇa will permit me. When I am here at least I throw in my own anchor. I give some assurance to my disciples by living with them in the struggle. They know I care. So according to plan, I'll be back in two months. There are other places and other devotees I am responsible to, so I am preparing to make myself strong to serve in all places. But everything depends on Kṛṣṇa.

November 23

WHAT CONFUSION! AND WHAT A MASTER!

"Swamiji," I asked, "I feel like I am many different persons, but how do I know which person I should be to please Kṛṣṇa? If I have many different selves, which self would He like me to be?" Looking at me and then replying before the room full of people, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "This boy Steve is very nice. He does typing for me, and sometimes he gives me donations. So you should all do like this."

From perverted, mirrored selves,
from New York City madness,
he pulls me out.

Out of the jungle,
out of word jumble—
a servant.

After *guru's* praise,
a happy boy
sings in the storefront.

KARMA-YOGA

One time I told Prabhupāda that since hearing from him about Kṛṣṇa, I now felt transcendental to my situation in the welfare office. I could realize that life was beset with birth, death, disease, and old age, and that none of my co-workers or their government leaders could solve these problems yet they could

be solved in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda was pleased to hear me state it.

I also asked him if it was all right to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa while at the office, at least to myself, when other persons were speaking to me. I explained that people sometimes spoke complete nonsense, and rather than actually listen to them I preferred to superficially hear their words while I chanted within. Prabhupāda replied, "Not only the people you say are speaking nonsense, but *everyone*—even the greatest philosopher—is speaking nonsense. There is no real knowledge except Kṛṣṇa consciousness, knowledge of the soul beyond the bodily conception."

"Great Gordon's gin!" —
black lady boss laughs
at the *karma-yogī*.

Mantra-armor,
inner smile,
Swamiji just four blocks away.

On interoffice phone
a chant comes out loud —
"What the hell is that!"

Karma-yogī's essay:
workers of the world
try chanting for a week.

Girls don't bother
him and Supreme:
Swami just four blocks away.

LAST EVENING AT POTOMAC

Bhaktipāda has returned from the hospital to New Vrindaban. I will be able to speak with him on the phone in a few days.

We went down to the little cabin where the new devotee, Amara-jyoti, stays. She was associated with a Hindu organiza-

tion before she joined us, and she's brought her own Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa Deities. I tried reassuring her that although there are many obstacles and imperfections on the path of devotional service, they should not dismay us. The Absolute Truth is beyond these problems and a seasoned devotee considers even the obstacles as part of his or her service to Kṛṣṇa.

Seeing Lord Nārāyaṇa before us, I was reminded of the Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where the *yogī's* vision of the Lord in the heart is described. The eyebrows of the Lord vanquish Cupid's glances, the smile of the Lord dries up the ocean of tears.

Even if we manage to avoid some of the world's dangers, the main one, death, is inevitable. But Lakṣmī blesses us, assuring us that real life is beyond this miserable world, and Nārāyaṇa asks us to come back home, back to Godhead. If we are convinced of our fearful position, why don't we go at once to the shelter of the Lord? Agnostics try to tell us there is no other world, but all Vedic knowledge culminates in knowledge of the eternal world, where the Lord and His associates dwell.

After leaving the cabin, we went for a *darśana* before Rādhā-Madana-mohana, bowing down before each altar.

November 24, 3:00 P.M., Returning to Gītā-nāgarī

Spent hours unpacking, physically tired, but more to go. Outdoors for fresh air.

I'm back on the path I call Recuperation Way. And that's why I've come here, to close out the year in health practice. My fancy new shoes from Washington, D. C. are quickly dirtied in the mud. The forest is bare thicket, and ahead I can see my chair in the woods in what used to be a hidden spot.

Whether in the city or the country, the real point is how to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. We have to follow Prabhupāda's way. In the city there is one kind of preaching, and in the country, a different kind. But the *sādhana* is always the same: chanting and hearing about the glories of the Lord. We have to really do this wholeheartedly and disdain the agnostics.

The comforts of life should make it easier for us to practice.

Prabhupāda used to encourage this, especially for the Westerners who were so long conditioned to the ways of bodily comfort. He used to say there's no objection to your mixing hot and cold water, just be Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Walking on the path, I come to the clearing and find a Gītā-nāgarī wonder—the ox-run energy machine, which is all hooked up and is being used for cutting wood. The same job could be done by gasoline engine, but our men are setting the example of self-sufficiency, depending on Kṛṣṇa without demoniac technology. In order to set this example, we have to go to much trouble, but in the future, when artificial reserves run out, it may be the only way that man can work. Working oxen is also religious and it keeps man more inclined to a sattvic state. I don't have much realization of these things, but I'm glad to be again near to the devotees working on such projects.

If only I could listen more intensely and appreciatively! Today I was hearing an intimate class Prabhupāda gave at New Vrindaban. As in many classes from that period, he was speaking from the First Canto section where Nārada Muni is teaching his disciple, Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Prabhupāda said that the *guru* wants the disciple to write books, but that the books should be completely Kṛṣṇa conscious. Nārada said that whatever Vyāsa had written so far was all right, but now he should concentrate more on directly depicting and glorifying the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda then began a basic discussion about real knowledge, that which can free us from death. This entire world, with all its so-called *paṇḍitas*, Ph.D.'s, and philosophers, is void of knowledge of God.

It was inspiring to think of Prabhupāda in that simple setting, undeveloped New Vrindaban. Even while beginning his movement in America, Prabhupāda was intent on farm development. He gradually revealed his plans, and still we're trying to carry them out. But at the heart of them is the same message which he gave in his *Bhāgavatam* class—go directly to glorification of Kṛṣṇa and somehow or other keep yourself always busily engaged in devotional service, twenty-four hours a day. This is the meaning of devotional service, whether in Potomac or Gītā-nāgarī farm.

November 25

Returning to Gītā-nāgarī

Bare trees—
easier to hear
the sloshing creek.

Dark creek,
white birches,
leaves all down and crinkled.

Breath is cold
in this healthy place;
big crows in treetops.

Wind through bare trees—
a no-leaf music.

Two gunshots
turn my thoughts
to tomorrow morning's worship.

November 26

DAYDREAMS

Daydreams are sometimes sweet wishes we savor, but sometimes they reveal our pettiness. Then we have to admit, "This is who I am right now."

Daydream: I was thinking to myself how I like my maroon sweatshirt. It is a soft color, goes well with saffron, and it is an inexpensive item, so it cannot be criticized as too opulent. I imagined I was on an airplane going to India and Ācāryadeva asked me how come I was wearing such a plain old sweatshirt. Other ISKCON leaders were also thinking that I should take a higher profile, but I explained to them why I wore my sweatshirt. By daydreaming about this I realized that my so-called humility is really petty vanity! Thinking about clothes and how I look and what people will say and think of me. Oh, and I will say to them, "My opulence is in my writings. It is in the books I publish."

Portrait
Manu dāsa

Deep tan Dominican:
At fifty years old,
after five wives
and seventeen children
his barrel chest covered with tattoos,
they still complain
he's looking at the girls.
"Too old," he admits.
"Manu promise. No more."
He wants to be renounced.

The strongest barnboy,
whistling the cardinals' song,
he's proud of his *japa*:
25 rounds a day.
He cycles slowly down the road
like a scene from the Carib,
and when his mother visits
Gītā-nāgarī farm
he takes her around,
a respectful devotee-son.
"Manu want to go back to Godhead."

I want to reach out and express myself to my disciples. Many Godbrothers are pleased that I have reduced the formalities of *guru* worship, but a few question whether it may adversely affect my disciples. I say no, except in isolated cases. A few Godbrothers think maybe I actually resent the changes but that I felt forced to do it. Of course, if my Godbrothers had been satisfied to keep on doing things as we were, I would not have asked for change. But now I see their points, especially that the misbehavior of some of our *gurus* has cast a doubtful light—not on the right of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples to become regular *gurus*, but on our keeping a standard of worship for ourselves which is almost identical to that offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

There are significant differences between ourselves and Śrīla Prabhupāda. One is that he is the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. We all live in the institution he created, and so for thousands of years to come he will always be special to all devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. There should be some practical expression to show that we realize Śrīla Prabhupāda's exclusive place even though disciples now have their own bona fide spiritual masters.

Also, when Śrīla Prabhupāda was present none of his God-brothers were present with him in ISKCON. It was simply Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples. No one could object that they were being asked to worship their own Godbrother as if he were their *guru*. Spiritual masters in ISKCON, however, have to recognize and adjust to the inter-family relationships which are often sensitive.

I want to get more assurance from my disciples that they are not hurt by the changes in *guru* worship. I don't want them to be doubtful that I am less than a bona fide link in disciplic succession. I don't want them to suffer contamination from negative remarks they may have heard about ISKCON *gurus*. The Vyāsa-pūjā occasion in two weeks in Boston may be an opportunity for me to express this. But I have to think also how my disciples can express to me how they feel about it.

I don't want them to be less fixed-up than anyone else's disciples. I want them to have the full benefit of serving and worshipping their spiritual master as the representative of Hari. In this regard, I have thought that my books play an important part for them, and my individual letters to disciples, going to see them in their temples, guiding their preaching activities, inspiring them. . . . I pray Śrīla Prabhupāda will guide me how to do it.

Neither do I think I already know it all or that I am a model of virtue in these times of controversy. I have shown that I also can be swayed this way and that, and I do not always know what is best. So I need to know better what to do to serve these five hundred to six hundred persons who have placed their spiritual lives in my care for delivering them back to Godhead. I have to do my duty in an authorized way. The controversial talks

sometimes make it appear very complicated, but it is actually clear and simple.

This morning I gave my first lecture on return here. I felt grave to be speaking the *Bhāgavatam*. Because I've been hearing Prabhupāda speak on the tapes, his spirit was fresh on my mind. Today's verse, spoken by Svāyambhuva Manu to Dhruva Mahārāja, described the devotee as tolerant and merciful, especially in his dealings with others. Paramānanda asked afterward, "What do you do if it gets to be too much and you can't take it?" I said we should be like Arjuna and consult with our spiritual master and other devotees. And it's best if we can receive courage and inspiration from the spiritual master to go on with our duties, rather than back off from them.

Lately, little things bother me and I sometimes snap back at my intimate disciples. Although I think I can control myself in serious difficulty, details sometimes cloud my mind and I feel forced to be sarcastic and irritable. I think, however, that even these little disturbances are revealing to me that my whole life can go wrong at any moment. The little thing wrong is a hint that disaster may come and spoil my rosy view. *That* is why I become irritable—fear of death. The minor irritability is therefore serious and is a signal that I must surrender to Kṛṣṇa. To put it simply, if I can't tolerate a little thing wrong, like lunch being late or a sweater misplaced, then how will I tolerate it when my prime plans for life become reversed, as often happens in this world? There's no way we can get complete control over situations, and so we have to surrender to Kṛṣṇa—the one thing worth learning in this world.

EARLY MEMORIES MY FAMILY REJECTS ME

As the weeks went by and I came closer to Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I couldn't hide it from my parents. And they didn't hide their intolerance. I tried to be casual, continuing to tell them news of my job at the welfare office and inquiring about their life on Staten Island. But when they heard I was still seeing the Swami, they became heavy. Finally my father tele-

phoned and said if I was going to insist on taking part in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he and my mother didn't want anything to do with me. I couldn't believe what he was saying. How was it possible? What was the point anyway, that I was interested in a different religion? And for that they were prepared to break off all relations with me?

When his mother died,
Nārada cried,
and started North.

Baladeva was hinting that it will get too cold, and there's no sunlight, and therefore the main purpose of our coming here — to intensify health regimen — will be defeated. Therefore, he suggests Florida. But I'm happy to be here, determined to do the exercises, resting, and fasting. We should stay because at least I am located in the zone of my responsibility, ready to attend the festivals as I promised. Baladeva's suggestion makes some sense, but I hope the doctor will agree that we can adjust to the climate and do quite well. In fact, my mental satisfaction is good here, and that is also an important factor.

The devotees of Gītā-nāgarī are not running off just because it's turning cold. They are hauling wood, sawing, cutting, and splitting it for fuel. They are cleaning stovepipes and chimneys, starting up the fire stoves in every building. The cows are staying mostly inside now because there is not much to eat outside. But they go out for some daily exercise. Of course, there's not much gardening of vegetables or flowers — we offered pine needles this morning to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Stored from the summer are squash, greens, and potatoes. Stored from last year — boots, coats, gloves, scarves. In cold rain and mud, they are filling in potholes with shale. Life goes on, and actually it is healthy.

November 27

1966 MEMORIES

I TRIED TO QUIT MY JOB

As I became attracted to the activities of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers, I began to resent the time I was spending at my

job, which kept me away from Prabhupāda's association for eight hours a day. The other boys, who had no jobs, could see him all day. They would sit around him in his clean, sunny apartment while he talked about Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was asking them to help him spread love of Kṛṣṇa, and together they were making plans. Although I was already pledging all my money to Prabhupāda to run the temple and apartments, I began to feel I was missing out. I decided I could no longer keep my job. I wanted to join Prabhupāda and renounce the material world with its birth, death, disease, and old age. I decided it would be a further commitment on my part to resign from my work and live as a full-time disciple like the others.

Yogī-Welfare Worker

With leisure I'll sit
in Swamiji's room
under the banyan tree.

Walking for Swamiji,
eating for Swamiji,
earning for Swamiji.

Mrs. Gomez and five kids,
husband deserted, leaping mice —
everything for Kṛṣṇa.

Disabled man with ten cats,
if only I could tell him
"chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Chomp of the punch-in clock,
bad odor hallways,
a love supreme.

I am looking forward to reading the published *Journal and Poems*, Book One. One reason is I would like to appreciate whatever closeness I attained to nature in those months when I

was here, when I had very little occupation except to be patiently convalescent.

At that time I appreciated Gītā-nāgarī and tried to see how Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is present everywhere. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that the universe is His nature, and a devotee is able to see Him in the sun and moon. Yet I also promised that I would leave my nature meditations in favor of active preaching as soon as I recovered health. I have recovered, though I've still got more to go. But I also stated and promised that I would try to maintain the gift Kṛṣṇa gave me to see Him in the country. "The country is made by God, the city is made by man."

But the forest is in the mode of goodness; the temple is transcendental. The preaching field is also transcendental. Since the devotee is always looking for a chance to be with Kṛṣṇa and to serve Kṛṣṇa directly, he doesn't depend on the woods setting. He can directly chant the holy name anywhere. And while he lives in this world, a preacher should go everywhere and anywhere in order to best carry out Kṛṣṇa's mission.

Paramānanda, who is the most dedicated to this woodland project, once told me that he looks at everything here in terms of its utility. The forest is for fuel, the land is for agriculture. Paramānanda is not looking for his direct connection to God through the material nature, but he wants to develop Gītā-nāgarī because Prabhupāda said the country must be used by man for economic solutions and for peaceful Kṛṣṇa conscious life.

It's a fact that the clamor and sinfulness of the city make it difficult to be spiritually-minded there. The mass of men are therefore advised to seek out these God-given places where there are useful forests and land to be cultivated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and where it is quiet, where the air is clean, where there's plenty of sunshine and fresh water, so that living is healthful and simple. These are practical ways in which the forest, in the mode of goodness, is more advantageous to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One doesn't have to be a mystic or poet to appreciate God in the country setting.

Preachers reside in the cities against their natural sensibilities

in order to inform people of spiritual knowledge. Cities obviously mean concentrated populations, and that means millions of souls entangled in the lower modes. That's why the preacher is there. But by nature, the preacher is a devotee, and so he also prefers the farm or country setting. Ultimately, we are attracted to the woods because Kṛṣṇa lives in such a forest village. In the cities we spread the word that man should live in the country. We also develop country *āśramas* to demonstrate how it can be done.

It is a joy to see Godbrothers advancing in different ways. Rūpānuga is starting to take disciples. He writes, "I am very much in an expansive or missionary spirit, and that is my main motivation to please Śrīla Prabhupāda. There are thirty million people in the seven states in our zone and this is my humble attempt to reach some of them." He plans to travel in a trailer fixed like a temple and visit people who have shown some interest through his correspondence and newsletter. In a letter to a Godbrother, Rūpānuga quotes me as saying, "Your 'Perfection at Home' plan is good for everyone. I hope I also can preach in that way. It is very nectarean to enter peoples' homes if they have at least a little *śraddhā* and sincerely endeavor to give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Thinking of Rūpānuga's just-beginning program turns me to think of many other preacher-Godbrothers who are moving in different ways under Prabhupāda's guidance, and this gives me assurance that the main work of ISKCON will go on, despite our brotherly controversies. Śrīla Rāmeśvara Swami continues to arrange for waves of literature distribution and traveling Rathayātrās in big cities; Mukunda Goswami travels worldwide engaging co-workers in the Food For Life program, giving *prasādam* to the materially and spiritually needy; through Bhaktipāda and the Brijabasis, every Indian in the world knows New Vrindaban-dhāma; Jagadīśa Goswami sets the example for *gurukula* education, and now he's innovating study programs that are turning devotees with renewed interest to the *Bhagavad-gītā*; Lokanātha Swami is making the ISKCON *pādāyātrā* famous all over India; Harikeśa Swami and company push

on with the East European resistance movement; Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami penetrates China and the Orient and now manifests empowered talent to write Kṛṣṇa conscious dramas strictly following the *paramparā* of Rūpa Gosvāmī; Ācāryadeva writes *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purports that please all lovers of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports, and he challenges scholars and philosophers with his transcendental mind and literatures; Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami leads the world in book distribution, and in South Africa, his co-workers have just constructed and opened a magnificent Kṛṣṇa temple; Bhaktitīrtha Swami travels widely throughout Africa with great energy and dedication for Prabhupāda's African mission . . . and the list goes on and on of self-sacrificing devotees doing substantial work in the mood of Prabhupāda and under his protection.

As long as this preaching spirit is alive, then the demons of Kali-yuga cannot stop us with their legal cases and other attacks. They will only make us preach more. And it is this preacher's spirit which will enable us to survive our own disagreements and threatening disorders. Unlike the anticult stereotype, which portrays all devotees as robot look-alikes, our God-brothers are so individualistic that there are different opinions on many issues.

As we head for the five hundredth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance, it does not seem like we will be able to overcome many of the disagreements and different opinions, at least not this year. Yet if we push on combinedly and independently, working in different fields, we will be saved from disorder and infamy.

1966 MEMORY

My memories are history and I am the historian. But it has been fifteen years or so since I first recorded these impressions, complete with Prabhupāda's exact statements. I read it now with a sense of distant history, as if it were the life of someone else. I know Prabhupāda-remembrance can be increased by the association of persons who like to remember him, and so I am trying further; it is worth the try.

If someone says, "Tell us about the time you passed up the first initiation by Prabhupāda. You stayed back from the initiation in order to do typing. But when you gave it to him the next day he said, 'This exchange between us is not automatic. If you love me then I'll love you.' You said that these words by Prabhupāda had a great affect on you. They made you aware that he loved you and that you had to voluntarily give your own love. Can you tell us more about that?"

Twenty-six Second Avenue:
pilgrims collect
its dirt in a jar.

Garbage in the storefront,
the scene vanished;
devotees stand and hear it.

Where is the Swami's room?
Where is his sunlit form?
Where is he working?

No grapes from his hand now;
but worship of his photo
with incense every day.

Prabhupāda is everywhere
right now every day —
"If you love me."

November 28

After speaking on the phone for forty-five minutes with Ravindra-svarūpa, I began to get the first signs of a headache. It's clear that I'm not playing a game by making recuperation my main service. Unless I can be strong enough to take several phone calls a day, to deeply involve myself in ISKCON issues as well as philosophical preaching and traveling, how can I qualify as a leader? Therefore I should not think that my return to Gītā-

nāgarī at the year-end is whimsical or arbitrary. Unless I take very seriously the doctor's advice for a program of fasting, exercise, and rest, there's not much hope that I'll be a hundred percent operative in time for the G.B.C. meetings in India next March.

Deep in the Woods

Wrecked car in the woods,
its wheels stolen —
sound of a bird.

A sled full of wood
sits in the mud
waiting for Manu and the oxen.

Distant hills in bluish mist:
a different view.

Forget all else,
go deep in the woods,
to find the holy name.

Creekside Thoughts of Kāla

Olive-dark waters are in torrents now,
summer's clear shallows
gone into memory.

You are unseen, Kāla,
yet we see you everywhere:
your passing hand
on the wet layered leaves.
Even a gunshot, a graying hair,
a legal suit, reminds us
you are the form of God
come to destroy.

You move us by coercion

to another realm, *sanātana*,
 where we belong.
 Your pressure impels us.
 You are a pointer
 to Rādhā-Dāmodara.

Olive-drab waters are in torrents now,
 the creek bends strongly left.
 In dark-sky gloom
 a crow is calling.
 I want to return
 to warmth and light.

1966 MEMORY

THE LORD IN THE HEART

Sometimes I doubted the philosophy, but Prabhupāda's presence overwhelmed me. One time when he was sitting in his room with devotees and guests, he spoke of the four-armed form of Viṣṇu as He appears in the Vaikuṇṭha planets and in everyone's heart. I thought to myself, "There are no persons with four arms anywhere!" It sounded so incredible, inconceivable. Yet seeing Prabhupāda smiling and gesturing, and seeing his effulgent newly-shaved head as he sat directly in a cross-legged yogic posture, I realized that he was inconceivable. Yet he was somehow in our midst talking confidently about the residents of Vaikuṇṭha. I knew that if I spoke up and scoffed at Lord Viṣṇu, Swamiji would reply with strong arguments based on *śāstra* and logic as to why it was all certainly possible, even if I didn't believe it.

In all Vedic books
 and in Prabhupāda's eyes
 Lord Viṣṇu is praised.

Beautiful bluish youth,
 four symbols in His hands—
 I scratch my head.

Hearing from Swamiji,

on the Lower East Side,
Viṣṇu is everywhere.

Hearing from Swamiji,
next to the Esso station:
I want to stay with him.

6

December 1

Arrival of December

Cold rain:
at dawn a silver squirrel
cries from a branch.

Waking in the cold:
picking velvet clothes
for the Deity.

The cold:
hearing with attention,
You are not this body.

Cold indoors:
an infant in covers
sleeping on the temple floor.

Warming the indoors:
little girls chant *japa*,
earning colored stars.

The Prabhupāda *mūrti*
in a warm, buttoned vest
which he never wore in life.

I propose to keep writing my diary full-on this month and keep a journal as I travel in December as well as next year. Of course, it will change as life changes. In the summer I was too weak to make poems; now I'm more eager to do them and give them energy. While traveling, write of travel and while preaching, write of that. There should never be scarcity of serious,

interesting topics, even if I'm confined to Gītā-nāgarī in winter.

Gītā-nāgarī is all mud puddles and gray sky. The cows' cold feet sink in the mud. At a recent temple *iṣṭa-goṣṭhi*, Gour Hari preached about the "Adopt a Cow" program. We are trying to raise money for an ox barn and methane energy unit. But so far, only a few hundred dollars.

At the Sunday feast, Gour Hari's boys put on the *Hitopadeśa* skit about the senses who went on strike and refused to serve the stomach. One boy dressed as a hand, one as a big eye, one as a hairy foot, and so on. Their faces covered with masks, they felt freer to behave as humorous actors. After the play, Ravindra-svarūpa explained that we are all part and parcel of the Supreme, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We cannot satisfy our self-interest or be happy apart from service to Him.

Then a sumptuous feast was served. The devotees are happy working hard to prepare the feast and to serve it and to partake in it themselves and to act in skits explaining topmost knowledge and to sing and dance before Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī. But the customers were few today.

I received a letter from Hal Roth, poet and editor of *Wind Chimes*. He has accepted five of my short poems for publication. The poems have direct Kṛṣṇa conscious content and preaching value, so it's a real breakthrough for me. I hope to pursue this line of writing for the "little magazines."

December 2

Reading *The Heart of Emerson's Journals*. I like him better than I thought I would. I expected all moral stuffiness. I was also affected by previously reading John Berryman's poems referring to him as "disgusting Emerson."

I like his appreciation of Thoreau, his honest and humble deprecations of his own weaknesses, his striving to teach and exemplify moral character. But the most essential knowledge, God consciousness, is lacking. Whatever faith and inspiration

he has is watered down by impersonalism and concessions to Western skepticism:

It is not certain that God exists, but that He does not is a most bewildering and improbable chimera.

I cannot find, when I explore my own consciousness, any truth in saying that God is a person, but the reverse. I feel that there is some profanation in saying, "He is personal." To represent Him as an individual is to shut Him out of my consciousness.

—*Heart of Emerson's Journal*, p. 123

Emerson was a "good" man, a *jñānī*, but he also suffers from what Prabhupāda called a "poor fund of knowledge." Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura described in his songs the evolution a Western-type *jñānī* has to go through to approach God consciousness. After much eclectic reading, and pride and pleasure in it, he has to see that his learning is all in vain. He has to see that his studies do not really elevate his soul or disentangle him from worldliness. He has to despair of the diminishing of his own well-being with the mental and physical maladies of old age—and he has to fear death. He has to seek release from the nothingness of death, and finally he has to be humbly submissive when God's representative mercifully appears to him presenting the genuine science of God. But such *jñānīs* are few, who are ready to renounce their scholarship of a lifetime, their worldly position and family, and their attachment to their own developed conceits and prejudices.

What is more useful to me in Emerson's journal is the self-portrait, the striving for self-improvement. He writes a private book, calls the journals his "savings bank" for use in further projects. His editor, like the editor of Thoreau's journal, asserts that the author's essays and speeches and other books do not reveal the power and profundity of the author's mind as does the journal.

When I find a self with some substantial character and learning, or merely if he's very honest, his personal writings appeal to me and make me want to apply myself to my own self-

improvement. A devotee has the great advantage of being already within the protection of the absolute energy, but he never fancies that he is now perfect. With the advantage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness comes the greater responsibility not to waste time but to assimilate the lessons of one's spiritual master, to practice them, and to contribute to the mission of helping others.

Emerson considers himself a theist and is astounded to meet and make friendship with a real flesh-and-blood atheist, "—that which I had ever supposed only a creature of the imagination—a consistent atheist—and a disbeliever in the existence, and of course, in the immortality of the soul. My faith in these points is strong and I trust, as I live, indestructible. Meantime I love and honor this intrepid doubter. His soul is noble, and his virtue, as the virtue of a Saducee must always be, is sublime" (*Heart*, p. 37).

This statement reminds me of the Ārya Samājist who challenged Śrīla Prabhupāda: if we live morally, why do we have to worship God? But according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one who is not a devotee, who does not live in God with all his mind, words, and actions, cannot possess any good qualities, for he is always hovering in his own speculations. Lord Caitanya strictly advised a genuine theist to avoid the association of the worldly-minded, the woman-hunter, the non-*bhakta*, regardless of how intrepid or sublime they may appear to us.

Bad Weather Sequence

Chickadees peck at leaves,
the squirrel's tail
is unfluffed wet.

Cold and dark:
the Sunday feast
draws a dozen guests.

Third day fasting:
passing through the kitchen,

my nostrils disdain.

Drafts across the floor—
I think of migration.

WALKING OUTDOORS

The Gītā-nāgarī trees aren't known for being very strong. Sometimes a wind like this knocks them down. But then our men have easy access to cut them up for firewood. Cutting and collecting firewood is one of the major occupations for all of late fall and winter. It's incredible to think how much of our efforts are just to fight the climate here, whereas in other parts of the world this effort doesn't have to be made at all. Why don't we move away and spare ourselves the work? Because Kṛṣṇa consciousness should flourish in these upper climates also, and that is a test.

The clouds seem like they're in a hurry, moving along in heavy wind. Some dark gray, some white, but patches of clear blue show through, and the sunshine also sometimes pours down very brightly but then hides behind the clouds. One doesn't know what to expect. The trees are waving back and forth, and sometimes little showers of snowflakes descend, even while the sun shines. Nature is changing its mood from the week of steady gloom, but now it's unpredictable. And it hasn't even dropped to freezing yet.

Walking down the path, I suddenly saw about fifty yards ahead a full-sized deer leap across the way in one bound. It had no antlers, but was big, alone, graceful, and gone in a flash. The sight of it took my breath away. If the deer had enough intelligence, they would all herd here. At least they won't get shot.

Earlier I heard a tape of a class Paramānanda gave on the Eighteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. One of the devotees asked a question about one's propensity. Paramānanda said we had to serve according to our propensity, such as *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, etc. But even if we have brahminical qualities or other qualities, Kṛṣṇa may engage us in ways other than we had

intended. He gave his own example. He came to Gītā-nāgarī simply to be a farmer and that was his only desire. But eventually he had to take on more and more administrative (kṣatriya) and spiritual (brahminical) duties. Now he is shouldering many burdens, including legal actions, heavy financial stress, management of all the devotees in the community, and now spiritual master duties. He never wanted these things, but he accepts that they have been given directly by Kṛṣṇa. If he can face these unasked-for difficulties, even disasters, this will be Kṛṣṇa's way to purify him.

In other words, the difficult tests are the very things we would never take to voluntarily. But Kṛṣṇa is forcing us to do it, to surrender. I find Paramānanda's realizations about propensity, and beyond propensity, to be very helpful. Those who want to introduce *varṇāśrama* thoroughly into ISKCON must reckon with this. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa takes us beyond psychophysical nature. In my own case, I hope I can do the things I want to do for Kṛṣṇa. But I also pray that He will give me the courage, and force me when necessary, to do the things that are needful and which are most pleasing to Prabhupāda. In this mood I seek to travel in 1986 and execute prescribed duties.

EMERSON

Emerson writes that to represent God as a person is to shut Him out of one's consciousness. Yet upon his engagement for marriage, he composes a prayer: "Will my Father in Heaven regard us with kindness, as He hath, as we trust, made for each other, will He be pleased to strengthen and purify and prosper and eternize our affection!" (*Heart*, p.42) The personal relationship with God is natural and inevitable, especially when emotions rise strong, either in danger or hopefulness.

Even impersonalist philosophers sometimes forget their dogma and turn to God as person. There is a prayer by Śāṅkarācārya in which he apologizes to the impersonal Brahman for making a prayer to Him. Sometimes the Māyāvādīs privately worship a Deity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in their home. Vedic *śāstra* clearly describes that the Absolute is both

personal and impersonal, but the personal is the origin, the all-attractive Bhagavān: *brahmaṇo hi prathistāham*. It is a great offense to attempt to cut off the Personality of Godhead, as if trying to kill Him or remove His head, limbs, feet, name, and pastimes. This offense stems from imposing a material conception upon the Personality of Godhead, thinking He must be something like ourselves, whereas, in truth, His form and personality are all Absolute, *sac-cid-ānanda*.

Although Emerson's career as a religious minister was short-lived, he was inspired to appreciate *bhakti* unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead as he saw it manifested in his congregation:

Is there not the sublime always in religion? I go down to the vestry and I find a few plain men and women there, come together not to eat or drink, or get money, or mirth, but drawn by a great thought. Come thither to conceive and form a connection with an infinite Person. I thought it was sublime, and not mean as others suppose.

—Heart, p. 45

And when Emerson's young wife died soon after their marriage, he again turned naturally to thoughts of the infinite person:

Five days are wasted since Ellen went to heaven to see, to know, to worship, to love, to intercede. . . . Reunite us, O thou Father of our spirits.

—Heart, p. 47

In a Bhaktivedanta purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains why even a great moral thinker like Emerson goes back and forth in inconclusive speculation regarding the ultimate nature of self and the Supreme:

The easiest process for understanding the subject matter of self, however, is to accept the statements of the *Bhagavad-gītā* spoken by the greatest authority, Lord Kṛṣṇa, without being deviated by other theories. But it also requires a great deal of penance and sacrifice, either in this life or in the previous ones, before one is able to accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa can, however,

be known as such by the causeless mercy of the pure devotee and by no other way.

—purport, Bg. 2.29

INITIATION BY ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA, 1966

As a Vedic ceremony that took place one night in Swamiji's room, on Rādhāṣṭamī, September 1966, my initiation is now quite remote to my memory. But the fact that I vowed to be Prabhupāda's disciple, promised to always follow the four rules and chant sixteen rounds, this is ever-present reality, and far more significant than the event of my physical birth forty-five years ago. It is more valuable to me than I can ever calculate. But just as one hardly remembers the occasion of his infant birth, so I cannot remember the details of my second, spiritual birth. I know it happened—I recorded some details when it was fresh enough to recall, and even now I can recall.

Bowing, with closed eyes,
close to his bare feet,
plunging in devotion.

Feeling at home.
By his will,
my new name.

Kneeling close
with the boys,
the fire-warmth—to Swamiji.

Touching his mailbox,
just before autumn:
I am his disciple.

Asking him again,
in the morning,
what does it mean?

9:00 A.M.

Suddenly sunlight, the first in over a week. Seed-pod balls

swinging from the twigtops of the sycamores; air rushing swiftly in the clear, vast ether above the farmland. The earth remains puddled, muddy, and cold; bankside trees immersed in water, but there's sunlight.

While hearing *Bhagavad-gītā* in my room I see the first few snowflakes of the year flashing in the wind against a background of pines.

'66 MEMORY KṚṢṆA-PRASĀDAM

Prabhupāda had to tackle a Lower East Side crowd, many of whom were not vegetarians, who were used to smoking and taking hallucinatory drugs. But he knew what to do: give them chanting, hearing, dancing, magnanimous giving of himself—and *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*.

He cooked daily for himself, then taught Kīrtanānanda, who began making a little extra for visitors, eventually enough for a dozen noon regulars. Stanley would keep eating as long as Prabhupāda asked him. Prabhupāda stopped him only after twenty *capātīs*. Everyone took at least seconds, a full plate of steaming rice, hot *dāl*, *capātīs*, and *sabji*. We all found it heavenly, and an integral part of spiritual family life with Swamiji.

He was the expert spiritual father and the expert preacher. When he proposed the Sunday feast, we prepared it with him, in an intimate exchange. We were up late Saturday night stirring milk sweets, pounding *purī* dough. "If someone eats *prasādam*," said Prabhupāda, "it is as good as if they chant the holy name." An ecstatic festival of chanting and eating; they who eat will never be the same. You can go back to Godhead from this food.

Swami stirs the wok,
hipsters giggle—
watching *gulābjāmuns* rise.

In Lord Caitanya's prayer room,
my hand enters the jar

of wet, golden balls.

A neophyte devotee's poem:
prasādam stops my falldown,
 particularly the *gulābjāmuns*.

Storefront love feast —
 fifty people enjoy
 while the Hare Kṛṣṇa record plays.

December 4

Tonight I'm asking Dr. Sarma to come over for a personal talk instead of his scheduled lecture. I want to ask him the following things:

1. The nature of these one-week periods in which he wants me to relax in a free-form way and not follow any schedule (no clocks, calendars, or calls).
2. I also want to ask him more about the process of renormalization which is to take place in January.
3. I'd like to hear from him again the nature cure philosophy about the mind and disease. There are three factors, as I remember them: a. Having complete faith in nature cure; b. trust in Kṛṣṇa; c. fearlessness.

One important factor is that a person should not be anxious to be cured. It's up to Kṛṣṇa. He should just try his best to practice hygienic laws within a spiritual life. I think I have to hear it again, although I already know what I want to hear. We'll try our best in these last two months, but we can't guarantee that I'll return to full capacity. If after January, there is a reduced, different workload, we'll have to accept that. But there also will be a new attitude of simply going ahead, even if there are pains, trying to do duty as much as possible. And my actual physical and mental condition may dictate the extent of that.

For example, at Māyāpur I will try to attend the all-day meetings; if I'm not able, I won't. I'll just have to play it by ear. But as I mentally tune myself more to it and understand exactly how to depend on Kṛṣṇa in nature cure and how to strive for it, it will

help me focus. Also, when others ask me what I'm doing, I will have a clearer idea to tell them.

NIGHTMARE OF SĀMSĀRA

Details from a dream

Demoniac strongmen take me by force. One lines me up with others he thinks are deserters from the Merchant Marines. A boy next to me on the bench laments, "Doesn't anyone know that this is being done to us?" I get free of that situation by reasoning with the police authority. But after only two steps down the block, another ruffian grabs me and I'm thrown into another scene. I am put into a room where top rock stars are at leisure, smoking, with many of their photos around. I plot how to escape from them. Over and over I try faking it, acting according to the people and scene I am thrown into. Usually I escape, but then again, by heavy violence I am forced into the next entanglement. From a sense of survival, I energetically continue to remove myself from imprisonments, and I have physical energy to do so and wits for another wily escape.

But gradually, while tossed around like a ping pong ball in hell, it occurs to me that there is no exit. I will not get out. That conclusion helps me form a new attitude toward how to endure the scenes. In one case I decide to sit on the city's busy streets and "meditate," no matter how strange it looks and no matter what abuse or violence it gets me. Since I'll get bad treatment sooner or later no matter what I do, let me just sit down. But the demons in Kali-yuga also have ways of breaking up the attempt for peace in meditation even under stress. As long as one dwells in this body and mind, he is their puppet, their ping pong ball.

At one point in the dream I finally remembered to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. I began to chant constantly and got immediate release. But then we were going past a Catholic church and a bully Catholic started running after me and threw something at me. But by chanting I was saved from harm. I thought, "This is it, this is what I need," but I was frightened and threatened. In my dream I thought, "What I have to do is always keep chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and not depend on material, external circumstances."

I knew that after the dream I would not be in such intense danger but that this was a message and that this was therefore my mission after the dream, to always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, I'll be subject to these dangers.

Now that the intensity of the nightmare is past, it occurs to me that Prabhupāda has given us many different duties aside from staying in one place chanting. The essence is good advice though. I should try to chant within as much as possible, and should chant with great attention. I shouldn't get diverted from the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. But I think I have to take the mission of the dream in the right way also. In order to help others who are in a nightmare condition—who sometimes have brief respites, riding in cars, being with their friends, getting hallucinated or whatever, but then are plunged into miseries—for all the people of the world who don't have the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, I have to work to deliver them. My life should be dedicated to that and that will save me also. But in distributing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, it may take different ways aside from my own sitting tight and chanting. I have to work within ISKCON, but I shouldn't be diverted from chanting.

REFLECTIONS ON ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA AFTER MY SAMSĀRA NIGHTMARE

Dear friends of the world, on our own we cannot help each other. We need a genuine guide. That is the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the best friend: *suhṛdaṁ sarva bhūtānām*. And He is not just a well-meaning friend, but He is the Lord of the universe. He is competent to help everyone. Therefore, everything should be done as an offering to Him. This king of knowledge, *rāja-vidyā*, must be accepted and distributed or we will remain in a perpetual cycle of birth, death, disease, and old age.

How bold Prabhupāda was to teach this message to the western world! To teach it in India now is also very difficult. Everywhere in the world is chaos. Kṛṣṇa's message is a hidden jewel. But when Prabhupāda contemplated the task before him he took faith that the *Bhāgavatam* had the potency to break the bonds

of the material modes in people's hearts. He was not affected by agnosticism or any impure behavior, although he was surrounded by these. He also saw that some people were inclined to receive Kṛṣṇa's message, so he took heart. But it was very difficult.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who saved me and others like me! Now the season turns cold, and this year while fasting I especially feel the chill. So let me remember how cold it must have been for Prabhupāda that first winter, especially when he had no friends or followers and no tangible hope to start his mission. He thought of returning to India, and yet he persisted in Manhattan in his *dhotī* and coat, walking the uptown streets in heavy snowfall. He tried what seemed to be dead-end attempts to purchase a Manhattan building, to install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Yet all of his wishes will eventually come about by the work of his sincere disciples. So if I am cold in 1985, let me dedicate my body's inconvenience to serving Prabhupāda. Let me stay on the course for getting full strength to serve the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I do not want to get swallowed up in the worst features of the violent maelstrom, as I experienced in a nightmare.

Maṅgala-ārati

Rubbing cold hands
before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa,
starting to sing.

By my side,
a little drummer
whomps.

With hands clasped hard
two wildmen dance,
then break apart.

In his summer undershirt,

Lilānanda leads the men
dancing back and forth.

Everyone loves Him —
He's everyone's God:
Dāmodara with flute.

Worship of Tulasī-devī

A teenage devotee sulks,
elders sing,
a tot circles the flame.

Going round
the sacred green leaves,
men and women separate.

Singing *jaya vṛnde!*
I think of many things —
and bring the mind back.

Here's the chance,
while everyone bows,
to praise all devotees.

CREEKSIDE NOTES

No snow yet; Dhruva is nailing up a sunhouse for me. We'll see if it can keep me warm for sunbathing, even in freezing weather. The most prominent birds now are the nuthatch, the chickadee, and the titmouse. All look alike—small, white, black, and gray, but the titmouse has a tufted head. They almost seem friendly and allow you to come nearer than other birds do.

The sloshing, sloshing creek. The doctor says we should flow with life like this creek, controlled by Kṛṣṇa. Do not think we are the doer. That's right. But Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to make a mighty effort of free will—and fight. "In all your activities and for the result, just depend on Me." Prabhupāda also writes in the pur-

port that we should act as if we are under the military leadership of Kṛṣṇa; although this may be difficult, we have to discharge our duty.

Gunshots with long echoes. The hunting season is divided in two parts; this is the second one—easier to spot and shoot the deer through leafless woods. Māyā makes it easy.

This morning's nightmare of *saṁsāra* advised me to always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

After a fast, simple foods like fresh salad or a single type of fruit tastes subtle and delicious. I hope I can keep a controlled tongue even after I'm well again.

The Prabhupāda (Christmas) marathon is on. Even in freezing cold, devotees are going out distributing books and selling paintings. I've been writing a marathon message each week in our *saṅkīrtana* newsletter.

Themes for my marathon messages:

1. The goals of the marathon; 2. Keeping up transcendental competition; 3. The importance of maintaining good *japa* while doing the Prabhupāda marathon; 4. We are not the doer, don't be attached to results; 5. Keeping quotas. (In previous years I would go out to be with the traveling parties, and I hope to do that again.)

December 5

MY OWN (FAVORABLE) BOOK REVIEW

The new book, *Journal and Poems, Book One*, has arrived. The library information reads, "1. Diaries. 2. International Society for Krishna Consciousness members—Diaries. 3. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda." I think one would have to have some initial interest in our institution and in devotional practices in order to enter this book. Hardly a best seller for the *karmīs*. But this is right; this is what I am. The book is me. The poems are bare of images, filled with ISKCON preaching. I needn't fear that devotees will find it watered down.

If a nondevotee would take time with my book, he would discover that Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees are real people and that the Kṛṣṇa conscious reality is deep. The ISKCON commitment is

not as Emerson claimed about life in an institution, a drain to one's individual integrity and power. Rather, in my case, a small soul is thriving within a living society of Vaiṣṇavas and is perpetuating a loving exchange with his spiritual master. I hope to show more in the future that within ISKCON there is potency for doing the greatest good for all people in the world.

The Gītā-nāgarī nature descriptions are a breath of fresh air. So give us more poems, and better ones. For the story of physical illness, here and there I may have thrust it too much on the reader, but mostly it is discreet, although a rather hopeless tale. I had no way to improve health, but the musings on the subject are transcendental. In the second volume, I will be able to further the story with the good news of druglessness and positive hope for better health, not just for myself but all devotees.

“ADOPT A COW”

Yesterday, the “Adopt a Cow” promotion program exploded into a publicity success. A major Detroit newspaper ran a story which then appeared on the AP service and is now running in all major newspapers in the country. Today the largest cable television station in the country is coming to the farm, and so are several other TV stations. This morning the story was also carried to every town and village via the National Public Radio network. And radio and TV stations and newspapers are calling up ISKCON centers in different cities to plug in on details of the story.

Paramānanda explained that this sudden recognition is not just because of our recent mailout, nor is it a fluke. The Gītā-nāgarī project has been slowly and dedicatedly developing cow protection for over ten years, and so this sudden recognition is the result of all that we have done.

When the TV crews come, the oxen will be running their electric energy plant, the kitchen will be producing its delicious milk products and foods cooked with grains from the oxen-plowed fields. The cows will be on hand in their own photogenic way, and just this morning a heifer was born. Gītā-nāgarī is in its bar-

ren winter look, but this also will show that the cows need more protection against the weather. Our Indian friends are coming to receive the media people, and we hope some practical result may come toward building the cow palace and ox barn.

Amidst this good fanfare, the occasion of offering *Journal and Poems* to the Deities came as a small footnote. But that is the way of books; they may appear one day without much public exclamation, but they work gradually and they endure. This morning Rādhā-Dāmodara were wearing bright green outfits, very similar to the colors on the cover of the book which was offered at Their feet. The Gītā-nāgarī forest scene of the book seemed to merge into the colors and the Vṛndāvana scene surrounding Rādhā-Dāmodara.

THINGS I WANT TO SAY TO MY DISCIPLES ON MY VYĀSA-PŪJĀ DAY

There are things I want to say, and there are things I almost don't dare to say. I want to evoke in them loving sentiments for their *guru*. I will remind them of the sentiments we disciples had for Śrīla Prabhupāda as the standard and ideal. I don't mean our devotion to him was always the ideal, but he was the ideal, and he evoked an ideal relationship. He drew loving service out of our poor hearts. So when Prabhupāda asked me to become a spiritual master and take disciples, and when I actually began to do it, I naturally thought of our relationship with him. "If you love me, then I will love you." But do I deserve to be loved as we loved Prabhupāda?

These matters have to be considered according to *paramparā* philosophy. This is also the standard and example given to us by Prabhupāda. In his books he has fully described the position of the bona fide spiritual master. The bona fide spiritual master has to be accepted as good as God, *because* he is the confidential servitor of Hari.

Very recently we have changed some of the etiquette and I have chosen to eliminate the ceremonial function of daily *guru-pūjā*, as performed by my disciples for me. But I did not intend this to change the basic relationship. This is one thing I want to

express to them on Vyāsa-pūjā day. I would like to somehow feel their pulses also, and know how they feel about this.

My immediate concern is that I not diminish the enthusiastic spirit of my disciples. Loving service exchanges between *guru* and disciple, especially in the spirit shown to us by Prabhupāda—this is a great faith-builder. The real spirit of *guru-pūjā* cannot be eliminated. Without faith in the spiritual master, a devotee cannot understand Vedic knowledge and cannot go back home, back to Godhead. I wish to assert these conclusions, and to deliver the genuine goods.

By Prabhupāda's grace, my disciples and I can do it, and set a good example for all devotees in ISKCON. But it cannot be done by my decree, or by their casual expression of a positive sentiment. It will take mutual dedication. Everyone involved has to strictly follow the rules and regulations, chanting sixteen rounds and following the four rules. Also, to be sincere to their *guru*, my disciples must dedicate themselves to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and its work. They must feel a tangible link with their spiritual master, and real inspiration and strength from his words and example. In other words, the task is not something that has already been successfully completed. Neither should we think that it cannot be done. We are a bona fide spiritual generation come from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and it is up to us to live up to our potential heritage. I request all my disciples to therefore enter into simple dealings of the heart and mind with their spiritual master, and to increase their study of the philosophy through Prabhupāda's and my books, and to surrender their independence by working in ISKCON according to the individual instructions I give them.

All afternoon cars go back and forth, sometimes filled with newsmen, past my window, down the remote dirt road I call Recuperation Way. Today it is more like Celebrity Row. Where I usually walk in solitude toward the meadow is now a focus of attention. The news producer from the television station has spent the whole day on the farm looking at all the departments.

Lying in bed at dusk,
watching a few snowflakes—

the ox-cart creaks by.

Rooms darken;
time to shut curtains.
Baladeva says, "It's snowing."

Assurances and threats come together, auspicious and inauspicious news. But according to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, there is nothing at all inauspicious in this world: the happiness is illusory and so is the misery, since it occurs to those who take the body as self. For the transcendentalist, there is only auspiciousness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī said: *viśvaṁ pūrṇa-sukhāyate*. "The devotee sees the whole universe as Vaikuṇṭha."

Dattātreya is reading to me from the Eighth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, about what to think of at the time of death. Prabhupāda says chant Hare Kṛṣṇa incessantly: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

I'll soon begin the activities of a rest week as prescribed by Dr. Sarma. There should be no schedule; take it easy, let the body repair itself. The doctor says so far I've been somewhat like the man asking the car repairman to fix the car while at the same time he insists on using it. Some time has to be given while the car simply remains in the shop and undergoes overhaul by natural repair.

December 6

FIRST LIGHT SNOWFALL

I know of different viewpoints from Prabhupāda regarding snowfall. One I personally heard was an appreciation of the scene as beautiful, as "Kṛṣṇa's picture." We were taking Śrīla Prabhupāda to his solitary house in Needham, Massachusetts, after he had visited the Boston temple. Snow had recently fallen, and the farms, fields, trees, and country buildings were in a typical snow landscape. His Divine Grace looked out the window of the car and said, "This is Kṛṣṇa's picture" in a way that made us appreciate Prabhupāda's Kṛṣṇa conscious vision as well as the natural beauty of the Lord's country land.

Another quote comes from early days at 26 Second Avenue. Rāya-Rāma supposedly showed Śrīla Prabhupāda a calendar with a snow scene. Rāya-Rāma exclaimed how beautiful it was, but Prabhupāda said no, it was impersonal, all white with no varieties. There's also Śrīla Prabhupāda's famous remark on first seeing snow outside his window at Manhattan: "Oh, they have whitewashed?" We think of those 1966 snowstorms as great hindrances to Śrīla Prabhupāda as he walked the streets in his thin *dhotī* and thin shoes. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also strongly denunciatory of the snow life at St. Moritz, Switzerland—"St. Hellish."

Yogīs climb the snow-peaked Himālayas to practice detachment from the world and to execute severe types of austerities there. But Lord Kṛṣṇa and His intimate associates enjoy in Vṛndāvana, which is always pleasant with blossoming wildflowers, fruits, and fresh green grasses for the cows on Govardhana Hill. In mild weather, Kṛṣṇa and the boys engage in Yamunā water sports.

So why should I be eager to look at the Gītā-nāgarī woods in snow? Because like it or not, the snow is here. An inconceivable, decorative oneness has all of a sudden transformed all of the rutty brown roads and stark-bones trees. Everything looks fresh and new, as if whitewashed.

The snow and cold are no picnic for the birds. Now the chickadee, nuthatch, titmouse, and others cannot easily find bugs under the leaves. These birds will eke out a stark existence once the trees and ground are ice and snow covered. The snow is a sign to some of the animals that it is soon time for them to hibernate. Once-brown squirrels, now fat and fuzzy-gray, have their stashes of nuts for the winter, but they continue scuttling about, collecting more seeds and acorns, destined to be always busy. But the little chipmunks will sleep, and the fat gray groundhog I see occasionally humping along the riverbank will soon go into winter-long hibernation.

As for flowers, some, like the Spring Beauties, bluebells, and May-apple, have been growing downward, but freezing ground will stop that. Yet they are so made that they cannot sprout un-

less they are subject to the cold, followed by the wetness and warmth of spring.

We humans continue to stomp around, dauntlessly driving our snow-tired vehicles, doing our business. A devotee is like the mailman, neither snow nor ice nor rain stops him from his appointed rounds for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, poet-naturalist Prabhu, you have my permission, while discharging your devotional duties, to look up and appreciate Kṛṣṇa's picture and exclaim it if you will. But don't become an impractical Māyāvādī lost in the white-light Oneness, and don't be sentimental about St. Hellish. Don't be after snow for snow's sake, not beauty in a void.

Dr. Sarma came over at pre-dawn, exclaiming that the snow-fall is craziness. It is the first time that he has seen it, and his initial encounter involved hazards in car driving. By the time our meeting was over, when I opened up the curtain, it was a picturesque dawn.

The sky is gray but reflects added snow-light. The temperature is above freezing, the full creek flowing, reflecting shadows of the trees and that familiar hue—graybrown, olive drab. Dr. Sarma saw it all with a child's first sight. "Oh, they are like falling flowers!" he said. "Look, everything is so light! How long will those squirrels survive? And look, the water!" He was looking at something I have seen many times. He also will get used to it, diminishing in his wonder, just as he will get used to the hazards of driving a car in the snow. What we really want is not child-vision or adult-vision but Kṛṣṇa-vision. Then, when we see the snow-laden tree, we won't see a winter tree, but we'll see Kṛṣṇa.

That's what Prabhupāda said: when you see the tree, you see Kṛṣṇa. Poet Basho said: if you want to know the pine, then go to the pine. But we say, chant and hear about Kṛṣṇa, and if you want to know the pine, then approach the pine as a devotee of He who has made all the trees, plants, creatures, and elements in the universe. Approach the wonder of this world as a devotee of He who is the source of all wonders of all worlds. "But what

need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe" (Bg. 10.42).

First Snow

Busy squirrel in a gray world,
white flowers dropping,
melting snow.

Meeting on the path—
snow branches.

My feet ruin the scene
before he can photograph.
Overnight art—
millions of snow etchings.

The complete artist
has placed us in His picture,
where we are small.

Hundreds of kangaroos
from my "Kangaroo" boots
imprinted in the snow.

Deer crossing:
their hoofprints,
a distant gunshot.

'66 MEMORIES

26 SECOND AVENUE: THREE ROOMS

At 26 Second Avenue, Śrīla Prabhupāda had three main rooms for his service to Kṛṣṇa. One was the storefront, which he had converted into the temple. It was a *kīrtana* hall and lecture room, and it also served as living space for disciples. In his apartment he used the back room for sitting, to read, type his translations and purports, and to meet interested guests and

devotees. At the same sitting place, on the thin mat, he slept a few hours out of twenty-four. The apartment's front room was a dining hall at noon, and in the evening a place of intimate worship before going down to the storefront. Once Prabhupāda moved in, all the rooms were filled with transcendental energy, bliss, and peace.

Storefront

On Swamiji's rug:
a playpen romp
to *samādhi*.

Upstairs Back Room

One night in that room,
it came to my heart,
he is as good as God.

Front Room

Before a picture of Kṛṣṇa
he bows,
we bow.

7:00 P.M., Harrisburg

The flight to Boston is delayed. Waiting in the car, I read from poet Issa's diary entitled, *The Year of My Life*, with its autobiographical poems. I discussed with Baladeva and Dattātreyā how we should look for situations to enhance my own writing of *Journal and Poems*, similar to Issa's arranging his life for travel in order to follow the way of a priest-poet.

Baladeva picked up on the concept of priest-poet and said it was acceptable and comprehensible even today to people in the West. Dattātreyā also expounded on the priest-poet. He said the priest is the most exalted person in human society, and if he can become an artist, he can help edify many people, making higher consciousness available to them—an artist without *anarthas*.

In flight to Boston,

the priest-poet.
 But where is his pure thought,
 his deep humanity?

Lord of the night,
 Lord of all,
 You are kind.
 Some know and worship You,
 others are blind,
 but You protect them all.

Supreme Person,
 You live in the hearts
 of everyone in flight.
 Some serve You in love,
 others try to forget You,
 but You guide us all,
 Lord of the night.

December 7

We arrived at the temple last night, but I was distracted and irritable because of a headache. The devotees welcomed me with a *kīrtana* in the hallway, and I beheld the beautiful Deities, Rādhā-Gopīvallabha.

Resting today and preparing for the Vyāsa-pūjā talks tomorrow. I would like to discuss positive ways that my disciples and I can enhance a loving relationship. They may give their own suggestions and ask questions.

ON A WALK IN THE BOSTON COMMONS

I did better than usual, talking the philosophy as Prabhupāda showed us. To live in the city you have to have money, I said, and to get the money you have to slave, and even then you are in anxiety over crime, and you are always looking for better personal relationships while other people are in anxiety. . . .

We saw the statue dedicated to the first use of anesthesia, and I asked, "Where are the statues to those who bring us eternal release from pain of birth and death?" The culture of a city such as

Boston is described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *narādhama*. The people have material amenities—buses, museums, schools, hospitals—but they do not have real knowledge in God consciousness. So they are considered the lowest of mankind. Therefore, the park's statues are dedicated to military and hospital heroes.

After one year I am still unable to travel or meet many people. I said my headache last night while traveling was discouraging. Baladeva said at least I got rid of that headache without any pills. We hear also that Bhaktipāda is regularly recovering, but there are some losses, like hearing in the right ear, and other faculties that are coming back only slowly. We all have to put up with much distress and limitation in the body. I'm sure Bhaktipāda is seeing it all with Kṛṣṇa conscious vision and becoming even more potent within this difficulty, preparing himself and the devotees for great achievements at New Vrindaban. And myself? Musing about further writings, how to make Kṛṣṇa conscious, worthwhile literature. Sincere and loving disciples are a great solace, and I am asking them to help me.

Disciples extra quiet
the day before my birthday:
walking to the park.

Boston park bench:
a man with magnifying glass,
reads his special book.

The statue for anesthesia:
old man medicine,
tending to a youth.

Disciples leave me to my thoughts,
but affectionate talk:
"There should be a statue
of you and Prabhupāda."

Midnight

On my birthday, when others look to me as guru, it has

occurred to me to take the position of a worshiping servant of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, and revive the worship of my Prabhupāda *mūrti*. I cannot wait to start it again. I hope this time to never give it up until either I break or the *mūrti* breaks. I know it will involve much inconvenience and worry. For example, sometimes on boarding a plane they may not even let you take the hand luggage, although that's rare. Many things may happen. But now there are three of us traveling together. We can share the daily duties. This is the *mūrti* I worshiped for all the years of writing *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. He is the most beautiful in the world. I'm feeling cautious but I want to go ahead and take him again, or rather, serve him again.

December 8, 9:00 A.M., Birthday Prayers

The morning session went all right. I kept thinking, "I'm doing my duty—it is nothing extraordinary I have to show or feel." To assert oneself as *guru* with all that it implies is a duty, nothing more or less. I'm not looking within myself to see how it feels or how it is enjoyable, but I'm doing the needful as far as I can. Whether the audience appreciates is also secondary to the act of delivering them the authentic message. Now another meeting is coming up in which I will tell them I am a writer and request them to read my books. Everything, however, depends on my continued good standing in devotional service, and for that I pray and depend upon Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

On this birthday I pray for mental and bodily strength to do my service. I know I should not really pray for health. But I will put it this way: Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You see fit to grant me some health, then please let me not hold back because of my laziness or fear or desire to live a protected life of ease. I am patient, and I will try to serve You in whatever capacity.

I am not the doer, so even with full health I cannot transform the world. One needs great purity and surrender, not just energy or the well-tuned health of a forty-five year old body. But I pray not to be a laggard, although I know I am subject to such an influence. Since I have openly professed to my disciples today my strong desires and hopes to serve them through writ-

ing books, therefore I pray to carry out this book writing not in a whimsical way but by producing solid Kṛṣṇa conscious works which help spread the movement of Lord Caitanya. As for my other important duties, as for the possible calamities ahead and as for the inevitable tearing away of my time in this life, I pray to always chant and hear and remember You, so that I may pass the tests.

December 9

Knocked out the day after Vyāsa-pūjā, in bed. But who am I? Am I a mind and body, a headachy *guru*, or am I an eternal spirit soul? I am actually a soul, one ten-thousandth the upper portion of hair in size, and I should be “thinking myself lower than the straw in the street.”

So if I write for the true self, should it not be only utterances of the soul in his relationship with the Supreme? Yes, but as long as the soul is still covered, he is praying that Kṛṣṇa will remove all *māyā*—and that is also the true utterance of the soul—“O Gopīnātha, I am a fallen, lustful rascal.”

Our reality is devotional; we follow Śrīla Prabhupāda. He showed us that the telephone can be used in Kṛṣṇa’s service, and that everything can be transformed into spiritual. Material only means forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, but when the same object is used in His service, it becomes transcendental. A nondevotee may deny this reality, but that does not deny our own spiritual experience. We *know* there is devotional life.

Thus our physical, mental, and intellectual perception is all within a devotional life. Prabhupāda has given us the sacred trust and responsibility. He has given us also personal instruction, the means to stay within the devotional life and to progress on this path more and more. Our devotional life does not end with the death of this body, but it brings us to the eternal life of bliss and knowledge in the spiritual world with the Personality of Godhead. Nothing should distract us from this path and goal.

Our task is comprehensive. In a single-minded way we have to transform all realities into devotional. We have to try to see

everything as Kṛṣṇa's energy and use it in His service. In *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, I've described how Prabhupāda's potency to transform matter into spirit was on a *mahā-bhāgavata* scale, and thus he was empowered to convert millions of dollars to build gorgeous edifices of stone and marble and jewels, and he was given the charge of thousands of lives for transforming them into devotees of Kṛṣṇa. We are not meant to lead retired lives in the name of avoiding the sensual, mental, and intellectual levels of existence. But like brave soldiers in battle, we are to go through this world mixing with the modes of nature, and yet not be affected by them. In this service we are assured Kṛṣṇa will protect us as long as we stay close to His lotus feet, always chanting, hearing, and preaching His words.

Kṛṣṇa has given us a mind and senses to be properly used for staying within the devotional reality. If we misuse what He has given us, then we have to pay the result. Our constant effort should be to stay within His shelter. I know that for many lifetimes I have been outside of His shelter, and I also know that *māyā* still has power to tempt me back. But I know as an undeniable fact that the devotional consciousness exists and that I now have the means to stay safely in its realm. With these thoughts I pack my briefcase and head for the airport, back to Gītā-nāgarī.

5:00 P.M., Logan Airport

Waiting in the car, chanting *japa* while the cars go by. I won't be dictated to by haiku or headache or health care doctor. But I'll try to write and be clear-headed and get well.

1

Newsweek says "Church in Crisis"
and Halley's comet is in the *Boston Globe*.
USAIR I'll endure
by reciting Kṛṣṇa's names.

2

A week of rest:
closed for repair.

No news please,
just Kṛṣṇa beads.

3

Hearing of *rasas*,
while viewing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa,
it occurred to me
I am eternal servant
of my spiritual master.

4

Prabhupāda *mūrti*,
I want to worship you
wherever I go.
Grant me the *utsāha*
for *ārati* and feeding,
bathing and dressing,
massaging your form
as once you allowed me.

December 10, 4:00 A.M.

DEITY DREAM

I was staying in an ISKCON Jagannātha mandira in India. I had only been there briefly, but I got to know the devotee-*pūjārī*. During the time I was there I did not see the Deity, but I heard it was crudely carved. Not many people visited; it was a small place.

I was with the *pūjārī* inside the Deity room. He was looking drowsily through a magazine in the local Indian language, trying to learn it by reading. On my side, I was loudly chanting the *bhajana*, "Rādhā-Govinda, Rādhā-Govinda," following the tape recorded version by Bharadrāja and the New York devotees. After singing "Rādhā-Govinda, Rādhā-Govinda" many times, I sang "Rādhā-Dāmodara." Then I thought of the devotees at Gītā-nāgarī, especially those of the traveling party and how they have love for Rādhā-Dāmodara. I thought they would like it if I sang Dāmodara. But my own attitude toward the Deity

was superficial. I had a spirit of enthusiasm, but it seemed to be pretended.

Now I am awake, thinking of our reunion with the Prabhupāda mūrti, which begins today. He is supposed to come over at mid-morning to the cabin. My thoughts of him occur to me as a follow-up to the dream. I'm thinking how we should wash the altar area and somehow make nice preparations for receiving him. I will also give Baladeva some money, and he should start meditation how to arrange for a traveling suitcase and paraphernalia, so that we can actually execute the difficult yajña of carrying this twelve-inch deity.

PREPARATIONS FOR OUR MID-MORNING CEREMONY

It's been many months since I sang to him, "*saṁsāra-dāvānala*." There will be full *ārati* paraphernalia on hand. Prabhupāda and Lord Jagannātha will share the shrine. We will have a *kīrtana*, and I'll speak. I want to remind us servants not to lose enthusiasm, remind us that Śrīla Prabhupāda is our dearest friend and preceptor, and so we should worship and protect him. We should know beforehand that this regular worship will also be sometimes difficult. For example, what if I'm called on an emergency trip to South America or Europe for a few days and I have to share a room with a Godbrother and I can't afford to take an extra servant? What if they refuse to let us take Prabhupāda in a plane cabin but say he has to go with the luggage? So many contingencies might occur. But we are deciding beforehand that it will be worth it. The main resolve is not to neglect him and this will test our *utsāha*, so we pray for that. I have to lead the way, not simply tell my disciples to do it for me.

Return to Gītā-nāgarī

Comforts of home,
chills in my back—
the stove doesn't work.

Never enough clothes.

But do the cows and trees complain?

Rest week:
I sleep in my chair.

Welcome typing sounds.
Preparing to receive our *guru* —
“It sounds exciting.”

Put aside daydreams
of sumptuous foods:
three-day fast.

December 11

JAPA DREAM

I was informed that I had been officially selected as the best *japa* chanter. But now the devotees wanted to examine every particular of my *japa*, including what kind of silk I used in the *japa* bag, etc., so they could know the components of the best *japa*. One devotee skeptically asked if I was actually a good *japa* chanter. I acknowledged that I was not a good *japa* chanter, and that examination of my particulars would reveal this. But I took hope that *japa* was important, and that I had been recognized as somehow relishing *japa*. The award was an inspiration, even if wrongly given. It would not be the cause of my downfall but the cause of improvement in *japa*.

Then time was getting late and I was trying to head for a meeting of devotees. But I was very late and couldn't get there. I was having trouble putting on a *dhoti*. It was cumbersome and kept falling. I stopped in one room, and Śivarāma Swami was there. I told him my predicament in a humorous way and said I was like a Charlie Chaplin figure. He laughed. There were also some women watching. He said he wanted to meet with me after I attended my evening's meetings. He had tried to meet with me before but could not. I agreed. We could meet after my other meetings. Later, while I was still trying to get to the first meeting, another senior devotee approached me and said that after

my evening meetings he also wanted to meet with me. I told him about the previous meeting scheduled with Śivarāma Swami and how I couldn't even fulfill that one.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DREAM

Since I have just observed my Vyāsa-pūjā day and have been reading some of the homages, this may be the source of my hearing praise and being selected a good *japa* chanter. A *guru* has to learn how to hear these praises and yet not be affected by them. Yet when they come from disciples, they are to be accepted. Anyway, I could not actually accept an award as a best *japa* chanter; that would be hypocritical. Also, I may take the dream as a dangerous mentality—to be expecting praise and honor in the company of devotees. It could signal a pride that goes before a fall.

The other scene in my dream was typical to my condition, anticipating going to Māyāpur meetings and having difficulty with numerous engagements and with people who want to see me. It shows that in my mind I'm looking forward to this big gathering of devotees, seeing myself present, and dealing with factors of reputation, trying to see honestly my actual devotional position and the reality of my limited energies. Also, for some reason, I have dreamt in consecutive nights about Śivarāma Swami wanting to see me.

Lately, I have been somewhat alarmed at even the smallest first signs of a headache. But this attitude doesn't seem very logical or Kṛṣṇa conscious. It stems from the fact, however, that I've had headaches in a convalescent condition for more than a year, and I had expectations that by now I would be "completely cured."

For one thing, I cannot reasonably expect to be free from pains. As long as we are in these material bodies, there will be pains. Also, I have made very definite improvement in my physical health and in my attitude toward health. So I should be more positive.

For example, I was discouraged over the fact that I got re-

peated headaches in Boston. But the actual mission of my visit there was very successful in that I performed extensively during three long meetings on Vyāsa-pūjā morning. The fact that I got headaches on the way up there and after the busy day is not a cause for such discouragement. Kṛṣṇa advises us to be tolerant. After all, we should not identify with the material body and its pains or pleasures. I think perhaps if I can remove all sense of the enjoying spirit from my life, then I will also be able to remove disturbance by the painful aspects of material existence. In any case, according to *Bhagavad-gītā*, I am factually a different person in a different reality from the pains and pleasures of this life. Pains will come in one form or another, and I should deal with them by hygienic living, and ultimately by a Kṛṣṇa conscious attitude.

Everyone has pains, some greater and some lesser. In terms of nature cure, pain is to be taken positively, as a symptom that the body is working out some disease in its natural course. Also, the pain is a symptom that one may be immediately engaged in activities that should be altered. The pain is giving a warning. It is not a sign to be mentally depressed, but to be intuitive to the needs of the body and either do some fasting or, if possible, remove oneself from a situation which is too stressful for the body and mind. Thus a devotee should respond to pain with the proper understanding, not become over-alarmed by it or ignore it, but go on in Kṛṣṇa consciousness dealing with it in a positive way.

Japa Sequence

Five rounds' fatigue:
I fall into the easy chair,
chanting in the mind.

How long do I have
to cease inattention?
"One day I'll get better."

Chanting with Prabhupāda—

best moments of the day.

Before Prabhupāda,
chanting with my disciples;
I correct one who's nodding.

Pacing in the room,
then on the cold back path;
savoring the *mantras*.

Day darkens,
I hurry the quota.

I had an illuminating talk with Baladeva and Dattātreya about Kṛṣṇa conscious writing. I posed the problem of whether 1986 would be so similar to 1985 that another *Journal and Poems* might be repetitive. Baladeva assured me that life in ISKCON is so dynamic it's never boring, and the material world is also ever-changing. Therefore, I should not fear that my journal will be repetitive to the point of boring. Also, with a devotee's vision I should be able to see even the quiet times with fresh insight. One could again and again write about a simple activity like *maṅgala-ārati* and not descend to "chewing the chewed." This reminded me of Yamunācārya's verse in which he says, "Now that I'm in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I see life as newer and newer and always fresh, but when I remember my material sex life, I turn and spit at the thought of it."

Dattātreya remarked that the neophyte devotee may sometimes not have realization of the great significance of his life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but if a writer or poet can describe some of the significance in the events of Kṛṣṇa conscious life in a sensitive way, that will help all devotees to understand the spiritual significance of Kṛṣṇa conscious duties.

I'm encouraged by all this to go on with further volumes in hopes of new revelations. I don't have to think like a mundane novelist, such as Jack Kerouac or Norman Mailer, who desperately tried to experience all aspects of material life, heightened

by drugs and changes of sex partners, in order to find new material for their books. Under the dictates of time, I will be led into many different experiences as yet unknown to me. And even when I appear to have some control over events and find quiet times to develop introspective writing, that also will enable me to find some of the new insights, as described in Yamunācārya's verse. Even as I try to round out the natural story of 1985, reporting by chronicle and expressing in poems, I may look ahead to a fresh new year and another volume of *Journal and Poems*, confident that it is significant work.

December 12

I've come out to see the first light, dressed warmly, except for the nose. All during predawn we chanted *japa*, three of us in a dimlit room, mechanically, but true to vows.

Outside deep breathing, blue clouds in dawn sky—the small waterfall splashing. A large bird's nest in the fork of a tree against the silver dawn. The vibrant silhouettes of trees surcharged with darkness; the peaceful, changing dawn.

The brown cabin is stained from the rains, gravel in the yard is wet and dark gray, but a morning's sunshine could change all that. This week is a respite, a "rest area" along the highway. Listening to crows, sitting crosslegged in a rocking chair.

The pond's little waterfall creates concentric waves reflecting the sky. You can see through clear water the leafy dirt-rock bottom. The waterfall—an underground stream supplying unending water all year—Gītā-nāgarī wealth. The whine of a sawmill starts up, so at least I know it must be around 8:00 A.M., although I wear no watch this week. Soon time to break the fast—with carrot-tomato-coconut juice. Then more rest, and throughout the day, hear Prabhupāda's tapes.

December 13

Worries

A titmouse cries,
jumping to the cold ground.

I gnaw at my fingertip.

Snowy rainsplash:
what if demons take our land?

Nuthatch moves downward
to root of the pine —
I don't want to die.

What looks bad
in cold downpour
may come out good.

Why should I worry that
it's too warm to snow?
The titmouse has orange flecks.

Dear Baladeva and Dāmodara,

Please accept my blessings.

It was a personal satisfaction for me today to see you both working so dedicatedly to serve our Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti*. I say *our mūrti*, because we are venturing to serve him together. Although this was not possible during Prabhupāda's lifetime — that I could be *guru* and you could be my disciples — yet by the inconceivable mercy of the *arcā-vigraha*, I am now present with Prabhupāda and you are also. I feel very much like a *guru* with his spiritual children as I direct you to take care of Prabhupāda, and Prabhupāda is able to allow you to directly approach him for bathing, *ārati*, etc. Always remember that you are helping your *guru*.

Early this morning when Dāmodara came in and did the *ārati*, and then later when I saw you both working hard to remove the impediments from Prabhupāda's body, I felt a nice, familiar connection between us.

Actually the deity worship entirely depends upon the *utsahā*. As soon as that goes, the whole thing goes to hell and we are engaged in nonsense idol worship. Or worse than that, we commit

guru-aparādha or *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Prabhupāda said about worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, “Be careful, you are dealing with Kṛṣṇa.” So I can say, “Be careful, you are dealing with Prabhupāda.” Prabhupāda is our worshipable deity.

So let us build a nice carrying case, face whatever austerities there are from having to take care of him in difficult situations, and go on with our preaching on his behalf. Thank you very much.

Your ever well-wisher,
Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

GĪTĀ-NĀGARĪ DIALOGUE

Viśvakarmā (fifteen-year-old boy): “Dattātreya, are you happy?”

Dattātreya dāsa (thirty-year-old *brahmacārī*): “Yes.”

Viśvakarmā: “Sort of, right?”

December 14

While honoring breakfast *prasādam*, I listened to Prabhupāda in a morning walk conversation in Bombay (Juhu Beach, 1974). Dr. Patel was making arguments. He started by saying that the *guru* was God. But when Prabhupāda began to correct him, the doctor shifted to saying that the *guru* was as good as God in the sense that he was *atma*, but that the *guru*’s body was material, unlike Kṛṣṇa’s.

Prabhupāda then strongly asserted that the *guru*’s body is spiritual because it is used only in the service of Kṛṣṇa. To say that Kṛṣṇa as the Deity is stone or that the *guru* is an ordinary man with a material body is offensive. The *guru* is delivering spiritual knowledge to his disciples, therefore, he himself cannot be material. Prabhupāda quoted Dr. Radhakrishnan’s blunder in saying that Kṛṣṇa is spiritual within but that He has a different “outside,” and therefore one doesn’t have to surrender to the person Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda said it is similarly mistaken to say that the *guru* or advanced devotee is spiritual within but has a material body. The fact is that the spiritual master is like the iron rod in the fire. The rod gets hotter and hotter and then acts exactly as fire. With examples from his personal realization and

from *śāstra*, Prabhupāda proved that the *guru* is spiritual in every way.

I was very impressed to hear this tape again and decided to play the excerpt for my three assistants. On rehearing, I noted that when Dr. Patel made it a matter of personalities between himself and Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda replied, "I am not *guru*." Prabhupāda said that the conversation should not be on the level of personalities but on the platform of transcendental philosophy.

In our own talks about *guru*, I also must present the subject matter as philosophy. We have to proceed by the method of hearing from authorities. Since I have taken the role of authority for my disciples, therefore I have to present it to them. They should not think that their spiritual master is spiritual only in one sense, but that he is actually ordinary. Facing these conclusions in a positive way puts more responsibility on all of us. We have to abide by the philosophy and not be impersonalists or speculators judging through the senses and false ego. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is beyond the perceivable, beyond the mind.

I regularly write here of my disqualifications, and yet in asserting myself as *guru* do I claim that I am not an ordinary eater, sleeper, and digester? How is this so? It is by *paramparā*, by following. This goes beyond the realm of diary-honesty. We have been placed in this line of devotional service by our spiritual master, and just as we uphold the truth of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His teachings, so we uphold the truth of *guru*. I know, however, that I am a tiny creature and very weak. Therefore, each time I assert my guruship and attempt to bind my disciples closer by these bona fide links, so I place myself at the mercy of the *sādhana-bhakti* process. The possibility of being ensnared by *māyā* always exists, and I must positively keep myself (as the iron rod in the fire) in the strict path of regulative life. I pray to be free of *māyā*'s influence. Only then can we avoid disaster.

Imperfect Senses

My reflection in the window:
eyeglasses, knit hat,

looking older.

Creature scratching
in the attic;
all I see is wood.

Entering the room,
I see Prabhupāda as ordinary
in my unloving eyes.

December 15

I visited the temple for the first time in five days and sat in a corner. I was impressed to see the devotees gathered and sharing realizations of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy—not that a hundred people live in a community simply to work or eat and sleep. There must be discussion of *bhāgavata* philosophy, *kīrtana*, worship—as well as work and play.

Since I have been more to myself lately, I saw by sudden contrast that I'm not the only one. The world of single-self is precious; it's valuable, cherished, but it may also become over-refined. I had been thinking how the spiritual master is all-spiritual, but suddenly seeing so many devotees gathered and hearing their expressions of the philosophy, I felt my exclusiveness evaporating. They are all spiritual.

Rādhā-Dāmodara looked especially beautiful, golden, sprightly, and graceful. I gave out cookies to the devotees and we walked in the cold (fifteen degrees) while I answered questions such as, "How much should we try to change things and how much should we accept what Kṛṣṇa sends?" Often I find my answers involve trying to intelligently balance between extremes suggested by the questioners. Devotees are trying to do the best they can, trying to bring spiritual life down from the theoretical into their real lives, to actually surrender, to actually refrain from sense gratification, to really taste bliss, to attain to pure devotional service in this lifetime.

Sweet Shelter
Sharp curves of hill,

bare trees on peak,
fields full of cornstubble;
quiet cold twilight.

Sweet sleep for me,
tho' a possum's at my window
leaves curled in its tail,
building an urgent nest.

I offer Prabhupāda a pear,
and taste it as *prasādam*,
attaining his sweet shelter
on Gītā-nāgarī farm.

December 16

NIGHTMARE AND ACTION

I was systematically put through tortures and taught through continued physical pain that I was completely dependent on my torturers. I was forced to think completely the opposite of whatever I once thought. I was dropped from heights, then jerked up, smashed to pieces, put through an assembly line where torturers plucked at the nerves of my brain and at my flesh and blood—how to react to such a nightmare?

The nightmare is not authentic simply as a reflection of sub-consciousness or imaginings. Each of us has actually gone through and will go through such pains. Life after life in eight million, four hundred thousand species. Only Kṛṣṇa consciousness can free us from this torture.

Conclusion: I should act to get myself free of birth and death now and help others. Everything else is a waste of precious time, even in the name of being a writer.

One of my first thoughts after the nightmare was, "No more literature for me." But renunciation of writing is not the goal. I should write in a way most effective to save innocent persons. If subtle art, such as poetry, actually works, then fine. But whether the art be short or long, subtle or direct, it must be effective in bringing people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. People in the

house of fire have to be warned and brought out. Call them out one way or another. Anything else you call or sing is a waste of time and you become also blameable.

Tree Poem:
A Message For Those Who Can Read It

Slick cold creek,
the twisted trees on your bank
cannot know God
for hundreds of births,
until they reach human life.
As they stand near-numbed,
in subfreezing night
I sense their signal,
“Don’t suffer like us—
go back to Godhead.”

For authoritative Vedic references regarding inevitable tortures, we may see “The Hellish Planets,” Canto Five, Chapter 26, of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There we read of punishments for sinful acts which almost every single man and woman commit carelessly many times a day.

A person who in this life bears false witness or lies while transacting business or giving charity is severely punished after death by the agents of Yamarāja. Such a sinful man is taken to the top of a mountain eight hundred miles high and thrown headfirst into the hell known as Avīcimāt. This hell has no shelter and is made of strong stone resembling the waves of water. There is no water there, however, and thus it is called Avīcimāt [waterless]. Although the sinful man is repeatedly thrown from the mountain and his body broken into tiny pieces, he still does not die but continuously suffers chastisement.

—*Bhāg.* 5.26.28

We also read how hot, melted iron is forced into the mouths of liquor-drinkers. Those humans who torture animals suffer after death in another hell where their bodies are pierced with sharp needle-like lances. Vultures and herons come from all sides to

tear at their bodies. "Tortured and suffering, they can then remember the sinful activities they committed in the past" (*Bhāg.* 5.26.32).

In another hell, a once-proud man is punished by the officials of Yamarāja who stitch thread through his entire body like weavers manufacturing cloth. Devoured by dogs, drowned in abominable liquids, forced to embrace a red-hot iron in the form of a woman . . . there are innumerable hells, just as there are innumerable sins, where "the assistants of Yamarāja kill him after giving him unlimited pain."

Anticipating the skeptics, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Sometimes people disbelieve these descriptions of hell, but whether one believes it or not, everything must be carried out by the laws of nature, which no one can avoid. It is also evident, to those who are not blind, that very similar sufferings go on even within this planet, sometimes for human beings, and for many lower creatures, who are themselves tortured by the so-called human beings."

After hearing of the tortures of the hellish planets, the compassionate Vaiṣṇava, Mahārāja Parīkṣit, asked, "Kindly tell me how human beings may be saved from having to enter hellish conditions in which they suffer terrible pain." Mahārāja Parīkṣit's spiritual master, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, answered as follows:

Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Kṛṣṇa can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays.

—*Bhāg.* 6.1.15

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees are working in this disciplic line from Śukadeva Gosvāmī, as directed by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Any other work is more or less useless.

The meadow at the end of the back road is not as remote now as it used to be. They're making it a center for wood-gathering. Bhakta Ray and Bhakta Ralph were there digging holes for a

large shelter. This is so the men and oxen can work in any weather. This area is centrally located for gathering wood from the different areas of the forest.

When I came upon them Ray said he was telling Ralph different stories from the just-published *Journal and Poems*. He said he was telling about the “*mama-tejyas*” fish and the retarded cow called Dumb-Dumb. They made me think that these descriptions are likeable to the devotees and at the same time Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Although Ray is a very rough character and has been in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for years without getting initiated, at heart he is a devotee. His wife is a devotee, and his little child, and he is tied down in the best sense to life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He recently had a serious accident in which an electric coil blew up in his face, blinding him for several weeks. He has had three operations and still has another operation to go, and as yet does not have sight in his left eye.

In several letters that he has written to me over the years, Ray has expressed himself well, sometimes about his own fallen condition, but also about the danger and degradation of material life. In the Vyāsa-pūjā entry that he just submitted in the Gītā-nāgarī book he wrote:

Please accept my humble obeisances.

Kṛṣṇa has certainly been very nice to me — though my heart is full of material desires and I am a miserly, stone-hearted, atheistic, Kali-yuga stool-eating fool, still I have been thrown at your lotus feet. Who can understand this inconceivable causeless mercy?

Although death stalks my every breath and I wear the three-fold miseries like a suit, still I identify with this body and everything related to it. You are my only source of hope or happiness within this material world and beyond. . . .

As we spoke in the woods, we heard several hunters’ shots ring around us, and Ray laughingly feigned as if the shots were coming nearby over our heads. Ray said that on the first day of the hunting season, three men were shot dead by each other, five wounded, and two died of heart attack. He also said that he personally chased two hunters off our property just yesterday.

We need bold, strong fighters like Ray, if only he can become a controller of the senses, a qualified devotee, and he seems to be well on his way to that.

Bhakta Ralph, who just came from Florida, is very young in spiritual life, but he has a hearty liking for going out into the woods and working with the oxen. His motivation seems to be entirely spiritual, with a willingness to take whatever service is assigned to him. He wants to surrender to his spiritual master and go back to Godhead; that is why he likes to go into the woods and chop wood—for Kṛṣṇa. And that is why I want to write books, not to become a famous author, but to supply more subject matter for Ray and Ralph, as they talk in the rest moments while cutting Kṛṣṇa's trees in the forest.

December 17

WINTER MEANINGS

According to the Vaiṣṇava calendar, today is Oḍana-śaṣṭhī, the beginning of winter in Deity worship:

At the beginning of winter, there is a ceremony known as Oḍana-śaṣṭhī. This ceremony indicates that from that day forward, a winter covering should be given to Lord Jagannātha.

—purport, Cc. *Madhya*, 16.78

Winter's arrival brings about external changes in devotional service, but no hindrance to the execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A devotee doesn't stop his activities because it's cold (*ahaituky apratihata*), but he may adjust in different ways to make Lord Kṛṣṇa comfortable and to continue rendering Him service.

The winter inconveniences also make us more aware of the difficulties and the temporal nature of this world. These are some of the lessons in nature's book.

In relation to the Deities, less flowers are available, but pines are offered. The peacock fan hangs on the wall waiting to be used again next spring. Deity outfits made of velvet are more popular. They help us to think of making the Deity warm. We give Rādhā-Dāmodara *cādars* at night, usually made of dyed Gītā-nāgarī sheeps' wool. Warmer blankets are on Their beds, and sometimes special heaters on the altar. This year Prabhānu

promises us to make a sled to take Them on a winter festival. The Deities of Gaura-Nitāi wear robes instead of *gamchās* in the morning before Their baths, and the *pūjārīs* make sure that the Deities' water is warm and doesn't cool down before the Deities get Their bath.

Please come, Sirs,
rest this snowy night
in Your comfortable beds.

Winter in the north is a real test for a community's dedication to protecting cows. It is constant work to keep the helpless animals in good health for producing milk. Fresh grass is no longer available, and the cows eat from the silage which has been so carefully stored. The barn door is closed, but ventilated for fresh air. The cows remain steady in a protected environment, keeping the same body temperatures, and due to the attention of the devotees, the cows' feeding time and milk production stays regular.

Retired cows crowd into the barn where there are now sixty mothers instead of twenty-five. Those cows and oxen who as yet don't have shelter indoors at least stand beside wooden fences to allow them to keep out of the wind so that their nipples and genitals don't get frostbitten. All the animals take an exercise walk every day.

The cows heat the barn by their own bodily warmth. They also have their natural warming techniques—fluffing out their fur—which makes them look fat. There is extra dry straw in their bedding and they snuggle in.

The oxen work throughout the winter. Young oxen get trained in the bullring and then work every day hauling wood and developing themselves for plowing work in the spring and summer. Sometimes caked underneath with mud, they look massive and yet tame, dragging tons of wood on sleds or carts at a leisurely backwoods pace.

At 1:00 A.M., he wakes
dreaming of his *guru*,

go milk the cows.

Walking with his gun
a hunter in orange cap
eyes my cabin.

With rolling echoes,
deer gun sounds rebound
into this cow protection farm.

Ingenious human beings have relatively less trouble, although we also have to work to keep warm in winter. Tolerating ice in outhouse water buckets, sometimes stumbling over frozen ox-cart tracks, talking about what kind of boots are the warmest. Devotees put shovels, tire chains, and buckets of sand in their cars just in case they get stuck somewhere on the unavoidable ice.

More potatoes and winter squash. Sometimes there's hot peppermint tea with the evening meal, or hot lemonade, and sometimes hot applesauce, but no more yogurt. More cows' butter is offered to the Deities and devotees, and it changes from a dark yellow to a lighter yellow due to the animals' change of feed.

As for the children, winter is another variety in their childish but Kṛṣṇa conscious world. More games and lessons indoors in the warm schoolhouse. But when it snows, there is sledding on Govardhana Hill.

Nap after lunch
then back to the sled,
man and oxen.

This autumn was somewhat warm and moist, and the winter thus far has been very gradual. Therefore the trees have been trained or chilled bit by bit so they now have strong powers of endurance to get through the coldest weather.

Their woody barks have become frost-hardy, insuring that the buds will not be injured. When it's summertime, a drop in temperature of even a few degrees below freezing would seriously damage any tree, but now, because of the progressively colder weather (day after day just above freezing and at night a little below freezing) the buds have adjusted and can take even sub-zero weather ahead. The gradual reduction of sunlight has also developed their tolerance to the dark and cold.

Simply to see these changes in behavior in the trees defeats the idea that nature has no intelligence and happens by chance.

The humbler creatures like the plants and creepers are also carefully brought into and through the winter season. Whatever hardships they go through are actually part of the plan to bring about fructification of their seeds in the spring. Some seeds are so hard that they cannot come out of the embryo form unless they go through the particular hardship of freezing in winter and then thawing. Only after going through several months of cold and wet, when the spring actually comes, can the seed embryos be activated. Depending on the particular seed, nature deals with it, preventing or delaying germination so that the seed will come out, breaking through its hard covering and appearing at the right time.

Deep within
the souls of trees
are waiting.

Protected in seed
a Spring Beauty
waits.

Until He releases them
no one can rouse
the leafless trees.

Two reflections come to mind. One is that there is intelligence behind nature that manipulates everything so carefully.

Mayādhyaṣṇa prakṛtiḥ, it is Kṛṣṇa's own material energy, directed by Him. Another meaning is that the winter brings punishment. The animals, plants, and humans all have to go through this. The trees and plants have a lower consciousness so that they can endure the greater punishment. But then, why is there winter at all?

Prabhupāda has stated that a geographic area where there is a severe winter is a place condemned by *karma*. So if one asks, "Why is the Lord like this? Why does He put a soul into this situation? Isn't He supposed to be merciful?" The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* replies that it is not the Supreme Lord's desire but the living entity's choice to get into a particular situation.

In any event, we should understand even in winter, even in dormancy and suffering, that Kṛṣṇa is giving us an opportunity to go back to Godhead. Even those entities that are condemned have another chance. There is rebirth, just as there is spring. But then again there will be the cycle. What we see either in winter or in spring is the cycle itself changing and happening, the cycle of seasons, of birth and death.

The summer may delude us with ease and production of life. Winter is more stark to remind us of our own inevitable demise. We should wake up to this message which comes now in the form of ice and nose-pinching, and we should work to get ourselves out. We should not try to hibernate like the woodchuck. Fully awake, we gather in the temple, chanting and hearing, serving Lord Mukunda.

December 18

I think about going to Māyāpur, although it is almost two months off. I look forward to being in the *dhāma* and writing about it in a transcendental way. I wonder if it will be too crowded for comfort and whether the G.B.C. meetings will be too much stress, whether headaches will come. But I look forward to the event in the bright sense that it is Lord Caitanya's land, and maybe by going there I can catch a glimpse of it.

The ISKCON controversies are polarizing devotees into political parties. After the world meeting at New Vrindaban

there was a meeting of European ISKCON leaders who strongly rejected the conclusions of the North American gathering. So now there is a European viewpoint and a North American viewpoint. The annual meeting at Mâyāpur shapes up as confrontational. It is hard to think now that our gathering for the five hundredth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance will result in complete harmony and unity on important issues, such as the place of the *guru* in ISKCON, the role of the G.B.C., etc. There are such basic disagreements.

One can get depressed thinking of the prospects for ISKCON's survival, and yet there are many on-going duties to occupy us, and also many reasons for hope.

Aside from troubles within ISKCON, there are those who have left to follow other *gurus*. Yesterday, one of them wrote me a letter describing a dream he had: "Suddenly the door opened, a devotee entered and said, 'Satsvarūpa has died.'" He says that an identical "vision" entered the heart of another friend. Another follower's wife also awoke worried about my safety. Since I'm still alive, he interprets these occurrences as signs that I am "dying out of separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda." He says the only recourse for me to gain my life again is "to give up all political formalities and considerations" and join him and his friends.

I can admit that I am somewhat deadened by separation from Prabhupāda, but I think my rectification lies in my direct relationships with Prabhupāda and my Godbrothers and within my spiritual master's institution. Their claiming that I am dead only makes me want to live more.

"Satsvarūpa is dead."

I am startled to read it;
somebody's dream.

Mark Twain's joke:

"the reports of my death
are greatly exaggerated."

Juncos in the bird book,

cardinals in the snow,
 "Satsvarūpa is dead."

Throwing seeds for snowbirds,
 the squirrels get first dibs;
 remnants for the juncos.

Seeking Kṛṣṇa conscious beauty,
 I write my way through life,
 Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma above my head.

Satsvarūpa's head
 is bowing at the lotus feet
 of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

December 19

Talks with Dattātreya and Baladeva have just churned out new encouragement and direction for my writing. I will continue to write *Journal and Poems*, but we have decided to change the method of publication, and this in turn may affect the nature of the writing.

What really started us thinking of change was the creation of a little book, *Under the Banyan Tree*, which is an edited version of my 1966 memory-meditations on Śrīla Prabhupāda as they appear in the November and December entries of *Journal and Poems*. This book is dedicated "To the writers and readers of haiku with the blessings of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, my spiritual master." Dattātreya so much likes the haiku and the printing of books in *haibun** form that he suggested I spend all of my energy on that. But how could I stop my daily journal? He might reply, "Write your private journal if you like, but edit and publish only the best, the *haibun*, maybe some essays, and especially the poems."

Yet on thinking this over and discussing it, I find it isn't satisfying for me not to write at full length in the journal and to share

**haibun*—A Japanese word for a literary genre composed of a combination of brief prose descriptions and haiku.

a good deal of it. We have decided, therefore, that I should continue writing *Journal and Poems* as-it-is and publish it, but in a more modest form without illustrations. And from the mass of *Journal and Poems*, as it evolves and creates its own projects out of daily experience in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we may draw out special books like *Under the Banyan Tree*, and edit and publish them with special readership in mind. *Journal and Poems* will be as honest as I can make it, true to each day, and will be intended for my disciples and friends.

I don't like those casual poets who write as if nothing much is happening and yet they are honest about it. There is more to life than that. If I cannot honestly speak of Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, then I should quit the page and do direct spiritual activity of hearing and chanting.

To deserve to write Kṛṣṇa conscious verse, I have to work at devotional service. Today I *talked* a lot about writing, plans for publishing, and I heard praise. But the real stuff is the writing itself based on chanting and hearing, and that has to be done in a state of grace.

From my fasting bed
I talk with disciples
about writing books.

Yearning for the spiritual touch,
I look around:
Prabhupāda's books.

Winter bead bag,
stout, gray wool,
filled with my *mālās*.

APPROACHING YEAR END

Of the two themes I expressed at the beginning of this year's *Journal and Poems*—illness, and seeing Kṛṣṇa in nature at Gītā-nāgarī—both have developed from doubts and hopelessness

toward a more positive viewpoint. I am definitely recovering from the worst of my chronic headaches, and I have found a way of natural hygiene which improves health and gives me (and others) hope for a better life through natural cures. I have also proved, at least to myself, that the Supreme Lord can be approached in nature, especially in the rural area, and by observing changes of season. I have also found a way to express this in short poems such as haiku, and I am inclined to see Kṛṣṇa now wherever I go by reading the book of nature and its seasons.

But it has been a year for patience. Recovery is slow, and still I do not attend meetings or handle a normal workload as an ISKCON preacher-traveler or G.B.C. manager. My God-brothers have been patient, and I have been patient on the path of recovery.

I feel assured, however, that next year will not be simply a repeat of 1985, where I am mostly confined to my cabin and the back path and the extended fasts and quiet. I am confident that next year I will log in many more miles, interact more with devotees and nondevotees, give many lectures, and take part in frontline scenes.

In 1985 I have developed a dedication to the practice of chronicle writing and to making poems and prose out of daily life. I very much want to continue this. Writing is a main expression of my service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is not a sideline or luxury, but part of my daily duty. Writing is included within my main management, my care of disciples, my austerity, my ecstasy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The story of 1985 is coming to its end and I look forward to the next year, aware that whatever direction life takes within the spiritual or material worlds, it all depends on Kṛṣṇa. I am just a puppet.

My disciples are selling paintings for maintaining and spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I have one more message to prepare for our weekly newsletter: "Marathon-End Fatigue and Depression."

*My tapasya,
a marathon*

for health.

Resting alone,
repairing and thinking
how to return.

In two days we go to Philadelphia ISKCON for the Christmas party. I haven't been there since last Christmas, and I am really looking forward to visiting. But I'll also be eager to return to Gītā-nāgarī for the final stage of treatment—the build-up. As soon as we return, Dr. Sarma wants me to do one more rest week. "Don't cheat on it," he says, "you won't get another chance like this for a long time." For me, the main cheating would be to write instead of lying in bed with eyes closed. But I'll try.

Prabhupāda on tape,
in the quiet with him,
singing his *mantra*.

Wearing garland, tan *cādar*
he sits on the throne.
Let it be my heart.

My Dāmodara dāsa
runs in and out—
love for serving *guru*.

Breaking Fast
Inside looking out,
ox turd on the road,
snow rims the creek.

Sitting outdoors
beside the cold pond;
too tired to walk.

Too tired to read,
I hear *Bhāgavatam*,

juncos, Thoreau.

MY OLD DIARIES

Previous to my meeting with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whatever I wrote is now lost and not worth inquiring into. Without a self-realized spiritual master, I was like a ship without a rudder.

Whatever you desire to describe that is separate in vision from the Lord simply reacts, with different forms, names and results, to agitate the mind as the wind agitates a boat which has no resting place.

—*Bhāg.* 1.5.14

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa's words to his guru, Jaḍa Bharata, are an apt description of my own helpless condition at that time:

O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, my body is filled with dirty things, and my vision has been bitten by the serpent of pride. Due to my material conceptions, I am diseased. Your nectarean instructions are the proper medicine for one suffering from such a fever, and they are cooling waters for one scorched by the heat.

—*Bhāg.* 5.12.2

My first ISKCON notebook, therefore, is a symbol of liberation into transcendental knowledge. Here my mind and intelligence could find shelter in the mother, Vedic knowledge, and in the eternal father, my spiritual master. And I could express this discovery even through my own words, in my own handwriting.

Recently a Godbrother found my first notebook, a four-by-six-inch cardboard-covered pad to which I gave the front cover title, "Devotional Service." On the inside cover page I had written, "Scriptural quotes of devotional service from the writings of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, kept by Satsvarūpa dāsa Brahmācārī." On that first page also is the initial quote:

1. Those whose thoughts are set on Me, I straightaway deliver from the ocean of death-bound existence, O Pārtha.

—*Bg.* 12.7

The book is, in fact, entirely made up of quotes, and one

might question whether such a collection actually qualifies to be considered a diary. According to the scholar Thomas Mallon, who wrote *A Book of One's Own* and who has traced the development of diaries in human history, such books, "like the ship's log, the household account and the commonplace book, are the forms to which the diary probably owes its murky start." The commonplace book is a record of quotes from books one has read or statements one has heard from others and recorded for study and remembrance. But why a particular quote is chosen is a personal matter. As Mallon states, "Inside most commonplace books there is a personal diary trying to get out. One can rarely read without reacting, and once one begins to comment as well as list, the engines of personality and narrative have started running."

The rare thing about this little notebook, now falling apart at its binding, is that Śrīla Prabhupāda held it in his hand and approved it. I had shown it to him one night in his room at 26 Second Avenue and asked whether it was all right to keep devotional quotes and statements. "Yes," he replied after looking through the first pages, "Vaiṣṇavas keep a book like this and write their prayers." His approval enthused me to keep up the book and to take it seriously, recording those statements that somehow caught my attention as important for progress in devotional service.

Prabhupāda's reference to Vaiṣṇavas who kept such books made me think of great personalities of the past, and of saintly persons he knew in India. Of course, Prabhupāda himself was the great Vaiṣṇava who had come among us, our best friend and the world ācārya who was just about to expand Lord Caitanya's movement all over the world. It was natural that I took almost all my quotes from his writings. I also tried to decorate my prayers by pasting into the book devotional pictures from old covers or pages of his books. On the inside cover of my book I cut into a circular shape a picture of Mahā-Viṣṇu and Garbhodakṣāyī Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī at His feet and Lord Brahmā on the lotus stem from His navel. On the next page, I pasted two pictures of Kṛṣṇa: in one He is seated on a rock with a cow and calf, and in

the other He is dancing with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, playing His flute in Vṛndāvana, and here I placed my second quote.

2. *He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me.*

—Bg. 6.30

When I began the book, the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* was not yet published, but I had access to Prabhupāda's manuscript, as I was typing it. (Some of the *Gītā* quotes are also from the Dr. Radhakrishnan edition, which we studied under Prabhupāda's supervision and correction.) Śrīla Prabhupāda had also only begun his summary study, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* at this time, but I also got to relish it in-progress while typing the dictaphone tapes.

3. *By patience and perseverance, one can achieve the highest stage of devotional service.*

—TLC

Because Prabhupāda had written it, "by patience and perseverance," therefore one could have faith that if he patiently persevered, he too could "achieve the highest stage of devotional life." And these important instructions could be even more impressed on the mind when kept in a pocket-notebook and occasionally referred to in the course of the day.

Now, almost twenty years later, I re-enter quotes from my first book into my present journal, with the same, original intent—to relish, study, and share. There are a total of sixty quotes in the first notebook, and I intend to occasionally re-enter them, one by one. I hope the quotes may also serve as a springboard into memories of those happy days of my awakening association with Śrīla Prabhupāda in ISKCON.

4. *A person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness certainly sees Lord Kṛṣṇa everywhere and he sees everything in Kṛṣṇa. Such a person may ap-*

pear to see all the different manifestations of the material nature, but in each and every instance he has a consciousness of Kṛṣṇa, knowing that everything is the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's energy. Nothing can exist without Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of everything—this is the basic principle of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the development of Love of Kṛṣṇa—a position transcendental even to material liberation. This point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the stage after self-realization. At this stage the devotee becomes one with Kṛṣṇa in the sense that Kṛṣṇa becomes everything for the devotee, and the devotee becomes full in loving Kṛṣṇa and an intimate relationship between the Lord and the devotee exists. In that stage, there is no chance of the annihilation of the living entity; neither is the Personality of Godhead ever out of the sight of the devotee. To merge in Kṛṣṇa is spiritual annihilation. A devotee has no such risk.

—purport, Bg. 6.30 by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

This is Kṛṣṇa's invitation to link with Him in *bhakti-yoga*, loving service. It is a description of a vision attainable by all of us, when with eyes annointed with love we will see all specific objects in the world in their true relationship to Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda has described elsewhere how this happens. If you love a child, then when you see his shoe you think of him. Or when the lover sees the comb of his beloved, he thinks fondly of her. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor of *everything* that exists, and so whatever we see or do, we come in contact with Him and His energy. In this purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives us an inside view of a pure devotee's consciousness when merged in personalism, based on a solid knowledge of Kṛṣṇa as the absolute source of everything.

With hope, I wrote it into my book, and still I am hoping, studying, and thinking, "When will that day come?" Was I more hopeful then than I am now? Did I think I would quickly attain this vision? At least I had a first vision of pure love in the person of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and now by working in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement with my Godbrothers, I have gained a solidity of relationship with the pure devotee which was not proven in the beginning.

Devotional service may be likened to a mango fruit. In the unripened stage, which is comparable to the neophyte stage of

devotional service, the mango is not so tasteful or usable. Nevertheless, it is a mango, not that because it is still unripened it is a stone and later becomes a fruit. But with ripeness it becomes a more relishable mango. Similarly, pure devotional service is present at every stage of a devotee's progress, as long as he follows the expert guidance of the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Gradually the neophyte devotee advances in realization. And once it attains its original luster and delicious taste (*rasa*), the fruit of love of God never grows old.

Rare touch
of his hand
on my book.

I see the tree
but think of him
in old diaries.

Today as well
I hear him speak:
"There is no chance of annihilation."

December 23

5. The Lord [Caitanya Mahāprabhu] said Kṛṣṇa is just like the sun and Māyā or the illusory material energy is just like darkness. Therefore one who is constantly informed of the sun of Kṛṣṇa has no chance of being deluded by the darkness of material energy.

—TLC by Swami Bhaktivedanta

6. For the matter of advising disassociation from the association of unholy persons, Lord Caitanya quoted a verse from Kātyāyana Saṁhitā: it is said there, one should better tolerate the miseries of being packed up in a cage which is full of fire rather than tolerate the miseries associated with persons who are not devotees of the Lord.

—TLC

7. Achieving that transcendental devotional service a man becomes

perfect, immortal and peaceful.

Code 4 of Swami's translation of Nārada Bhakti-sūtra

Go with Kṛṣṇa, away from *māyā*. Live with the devotees and not unholy persons. Achieve the goal of human life — pure devotional service. Swamiji agrees to translate *Bhakti-sūtra*. A picture of young Kṛṣṇa with Rādhārāṇī, Her hand on His shoulder. In those days and now it is the same — *māyā* is the fearful dark, Kṛṣṇa is the sun.

One night in those early days I got bored with the association of the devotees and I wandered out of the dance hall where we had gone as preachers with our painting of Kṛṣṇa and our chanting on Prabhupāda's behalf. But as soon as I reached the Lower East Side streets, I sensed the corruption and danger of it all. As I walked among the passersby, stores, and streetlights, it was very fearful. I went home alone but rejoined the devotees the next day, contrite and confessing. "You can't get away from us," Kīrtanānanda laughed.

The mundaners may view this as they like, but they cannot know immortal, perfect life, peace in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And for a devotee to gain even first entrance into devotional service, he has to go beyond his petty self-intent. He has to be humble in living with the devotees. Sometimes living with the devotees brings more austerity than he bargained for. And he has to chip away at his hard shell of envy toward Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Little gray notebook,
reveal to me
secrets of *bhakti-yoga*.

8. One who understands perfectly the process of devotional service becomes intoxicated in the discharge of devotional service; he becomes charmed by it and thus he enjoys in his whole self, being engaged in the service of the Supreme Self.

—Code 6, NBS

I have already written about *Nārada Bhakti-sūtra*, how I

asked Prabhupāda if he would please translate it because it seemed so nice. "Yes," he said. They are very basic codes, not exactly like *Brahma-sūtra* wherein the Brahman is revealed as the Supreme Person, but which has been seized by the Śāṅkarite impersonalists and debated on by Śāṅkarites and Vaiṣṇavas for centuries. Yet the impersonalists have entered even into the *Bhakti-sūtra*; and they call *bhakti* "divine love" and hint at ultimate states of undistinguished oneness "beyond" Lord Kṛṣṇa. Even in the so-called land of *bhakti* it is as dangerous alone as the Lower East Side streets without devotee friends. And how cheaply they utter the words, "Vaiṣṇava," "love of God," and "*bhakti*," all of which are very rare to find.

Prabhupāda gave us a good number of the codes and purports of *Nārada Bhakti-sūtra* and then stopped. Never mind, he said, it's all contained in *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, don't be so eager to become "charmed and intoxicated" by new books, different *śāstras*.

9. How can Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is ever-joyful and ever-smiling like a pearl-white kuṇḍa flower appear in the heart of a person who is governed by emotions of bereavement, sorrow, anger, etc.?

—Padma Purāṇa

2:00 A.M.

I'm pleasantly tired, up since midnight with this old book of quotes. The stove is heating up the room, in the dark outside there is a thin coat of snow, and my companions are sleeping in the next-door rooms.

I look at another page pasted with circular-cut forms of different Viṣṇus, presiding Deities of Vaikuṇṭha planets, Mādhava, Govinda, Keśava, Nṛsimha. Lord Kṛṣṇa cannot appear in our hearts if we are governed by base emotions, bodily identification. The description of smiling Kṛṣṇa, compared to a beautiful white flower sitting in our hearts, is given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda in *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. I take a little bit at a time from the *śāstra*, as much as I can, but always at least something, regularly. Go on hearing.

Earlier last night Dr. Sarma taught me that one should stop eating when a burp comes. The burp is a signal that the lower, elastic part of the stomach is filled. If after this signal one persists in packing food into his stomach, filling the upper rigid portion, he will invite indigestion, dis-ease. But acceptance of Kṛṣṇa conscious knowledge through hearing is different. The little earhole can receive unlimited sound. It only requires a hunger for becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. As the fire of digestion can be increased by certain exercises and right living, so we can increase our capacity for attentive hearing. And there is no burp, no end to it. The transcendental pleasure increases.

Going to bed,
praying
for poems.

10. One should behave socially and politically and in the matter of eating only just to keep the body fit till the end of this body.

— Code 14 NBS

Keep everything simple because it's destined to end soon. Don't aggravate sense gratification—it leads to pains of rebirth. These statements may appear utopian to the readers of *Nārada Bhakti-sūtra*, as they were to me. We hippies would mix "spirituality" with drugs, write "Atma" on the wall or "LSD is God," and we said we were attracted to the *Upaniṣads*. But as Hayagrīva states, " 'Meditation' was a euphemism that somehow connected our highs with our readings."

But Śrīla Prabhupāda was a saint in the disciplic succession of Nārada, and he was the equivalent of Nārada—who travels everywhere, singing Hare Kṛṣṇa and delivering the Supreme Lord (who comes when evil fills up in the worst age, who overcomes the demons just by His presence) to the fallen souls, the sage among the devas. With Prabhupāda present we could actually hope to follow the *Bhakti-sūtras*.

He said even the best spiritual master, however, requires a submissive disciple if the disciple is to actually succeed. But in

his living example, and even now by his *vāṇī* and by his personal protection, Prabhupāda takes us through the *bhakti* path. We pray to him, yet he advises, don't just stay at my feet like a baby, be a bold preacher and that will keep you free of *māyā*—work laboriously in ISKCON.

En route to Philadelphia

At the turnpike exit, Baladeva asked the attendant if there was a park nearby.

"A park?" the man replied, as if it was a strange question. "For what?"

"Just to walk in," replied Baladeva.

"No, none that I know of," he replied curtly.

As we drove into Lancaster everything was parceled off into properties, streets, small homes, sidewalks, then downtown stores and offices. I got the feeling that there was no rest anywhere in the land, unless one had a specific place or business to go to. Superficially it seemed to be a well-ordered suburb, but it was actually devoid of natural setting or welcome for any traveler, especially one without a car or money.

We pulled our car off the road by a farm, for exercise and a rest break. There were many signs—"No trespassing or hunting." As Baladeva and I walked up a hill, a car approached and I felt self-conscious wearing my orange *dhoti* in Lancaster County. Where's my spirit of adventure, gone with youth?

Prabhupāda is with us as *arcā-vigraha*, comfortably seated on the *vyāsāsana* on the front seat of the car. We make a small altar out of the glove compartment and offer him a sliced banana. After prayers, we honor *prasādam*. While tasting the bananas, we hear Prabhupāda speak clearly on the glories of devotional service. He reprimands the impersonalist and expresses displeasure that so few people take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They cheat, he said, and flatter by telling people they are as good as God. But when he says they are not God and that Kṛṣṇa is God, they don't like it. Prabhupāda said the people of the world are all demons. Some are fifty percent and some are eighty percent, but to some degree almost all refuse to accept Kṛṣṇa—and that is the symptom of the demon.

Reading in my old diary of the six symptoms of surrender, we

roll into Philadelphia, my first visit this year. We move with the heavy flow in the same direction as Conrail freight train, trailer trucks, the Schuylkill River, and Wissahickon Drive. But our way is different.

11. 1. One should decide first that he should only do such things which are favorable for devotional service and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 2. One should decide to give up everything which is not favorable in the matter of discharging devotional service and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 3. One should believe firmly that Kṛṣṇa will protect him in all circumstances, and no one is better protected than by Kṛṣṇa. This conviction should be distinct from the monistic philosophy that one is as good as Kṛṣṇa. One should rather think always that Kṛṣṇa is great or God is great and that the devotee is always protected by Kṛṣṇa. This firm conviction must be there. 4. One should have a conviction that "Kṛṣṇa is my maintainer and protector" and one should not take any shelter of any demigod for protection or maintenance. 5. One should always think that his desires or his determination are not independent, without sanction of Kṛṣṇa nothing can be successful. 6. One should always think himself as the poorest of the poor, one should always remain dependent on the supreme will of Kṛṣṇa. Such a surrendered person always prays to the Lord: O Lord, I am Yours in every respect, I am Your eternal servant.

—purport to Code 12, Nārada Bhakti-sūtra

I am helping to arrange a few marriages among my disciples. Based on the principle of the first symptom of surrender—doing that which is favorable for devotional service. One might argue that marriage should be avoided, based on the second symptom of surrender, "avoidance of the unfavorable." But in the Eighteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa states that acts of sacrifice, charity, and penance are not to be given up.

The Lord says here that any sacrifice that is meant for human welfare should never be given up. The *vivāha-yajña*, the marriage ceremony, is meant to regulate the human mind so that it may become peaceful for spiritual advancement. For most men, the *vivāha-yajña* should be encouraged even by persons in the renounced order of life.

—purport, Bg. 18.5

Jaḍa Bharata dāsa, now thirty-one years old, has come for-

ward and asked me to make a marriage match for him. He is an intense book distributor, a legend among his contemporaries, since he has been distributing books steadily in big cities for over eight-and-a-half years. When he is in the temple, especially among his seniors, he appears to be somewhat of an introvert, a stereotype of a *brahmacārī* who wears two different colored socks, whose clothes are sometimes disarrayed, very quiet and shy. But when he goes out to the parking lot in the daytime or in the evening when he plunges into a passionate crowd at a rock concert, Jaḍa Bharata turns to fire. He runs from person to person, distributing Prabhupāda's books with flair and expertise. He wants to continue this service, but now he admits that he would be more peaceful with a Kṛṣṇa conscious wife.

Another disciple, Devakī dāsī, has been an emblem of patience and saintliness among the women for eight years. She served in the Manhattan temple, was transferred to Lake Huntington and always diligently works long hours, especially in service to Lord Jagannātha. She is thirty-one years old and still patiently waiting for an arrangement to be made for marriage. She knows she needs the marriage, and has repeatedly requested it, but has not threatened or demanded that the husband be produced. She has gone on with her service depending on Kṛṣṇa, aware that her temple authorities are trying to do the best for her. There are other women like her who have given up their youth to Kṛṣṇa and are patiently waiting for their spiritual father and other guides to arrange a suitable marriage for them so that they may go on with their main practice, serving the mission of Prabhupāda and ISKCON.

Aside from good examples, there are those who join the movement and later go away. Surrender is too great for them, such as the austerity of waiting for marriage. (Waiting is the fifth symptom of surrender, "One should always think his desires or determination are not independent but require the sanction of Kṛṣṇa.") Impatiently they venture out of the association of devotees to make their own arrangements for family, income, and happiness.

Sometimes later they regret it, and sometimes they maintain

that they've done the right thing, but according to Lord Caitanya, they have become deluded by the darkness of material energy. They should rather tolerate the miseries of being packed up in a cage filled with fire rather than go tolerate association of persons who are not devotees of the Lord.

Devotees who remain in ISKCON and seek out marriage arrangements are at a material disadvantage, since there are so few devotees to choose from. The sincere servants of the Vaiṣṇavas are one in a million. In arranging a marriage, we cannot apply the sciences of mate-picking as absolute guides. By sincerity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, two devotees can come together in an auspicious combination, based on principles beyond astrology or mundane psychology. Although astrology has been used in ancient Vedic culture, it is not necessary or even applicable among devotees today. Prabhupāda has asked us to avoid it.

Of course, this is *traī-guṇya*, [use of Vedic astrology for marriage selection] a material calculation, according to the *Vedas*, but if the boy and girl are devotees there need be no such considerations. A devotee is transcendental, and therefore in a marriage between devotees, the boy and girl form a very happy combination.

—purport, *Bhāg.* 6.2.26

In ordinary marriages, material attraction dominates, but it always diminishes. This kind of marriage is predicted to become the only type of marriage in Kali-yuga, and as soon as physical attraction diminishes, then divorce follows. But divorce is considered abominable by Kṛṣṇa conscious standards. If we unite a couple based on deeper concepts of allegiance and duty and symptoms of surrender, then we can avoid divorce. In any case, marriage in this world cannot be perfect, but as a serious servant of the spiritual master, the man and woman can execute *gṛhastha* life for their mutual spiritual benefit.

In the immediate cases before me, devotees have sometimes expressed who they would like to marry, or they have simply left it up to me, but the emphasis is on finding a partner who is best to help them in spiritual life. Every devotee wants a

husband or wife who is himself or herself surrendered to the order of the spiritual master. Such surrendered devotees will actually have a great advantage over others in finding successful married life. Because Kṛṣṇa is our protector and our maintainer, we are confident that if we prosecute devotional service full-heartedly, everything else desirable, such as finding an attractive compatible mate, peaceful family life with children, decent standard of living, self-satisfaction in occupation, economic security—and at last, liberation from birth and death, eternal shelter at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead—all are guaranteed.

December 24, Middle of the night

I just heard a snatch of a Christmas carol from a passing car, “Peace on earth and mercy mild.” This is the real meaning of Christmas—into the world a savior has been born who will free mankind from his sins, and *therefore* there is Christmas spirit or happiness—the pitiful *jīvas* have a savior! But of course they do not follow his actual instructions.

Yesterday morning I spoke with my disciples in Philadelphia, encouraging them to stay in ISKCON and surrender; Kṛṣṇa will reward them with all their material and spiritual desires. Then Tattva-vit asked, “We are enjoying reading your new book, *Journal and Poems*. So is your writing going all right?” The question seemed to be a polite prompter so that I could talk about my writing. But I fell silent and only said, “Yes, it is going all right.” Finally I added, “Whatever is all right is in the book which you have, *Journal and Poems*. And what’s not all right, that’s also there.” At least this is my vision of the journal, to include that which is right and that which is as yet immature, and both for the benefit of the readers. My hope is that the whole of the journal will speak persuasively and that the readers will appreciate it.

Let me at least constantly write the names of Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya, and then according to the literary judgement of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, my writing will be all right; the more the better.

Hark! The herald angels sing
 Glory to the newborn king.
 Peace on earth and mercy mild,
 God and sinner reconciled.

Significant words, but it's just background music for most as they enter the all-night grocers for a last minute retail exchange, fueling the family illusion: hope and bliss by kin-union, worship of the self as mucous-bile-air.

12. *In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11th Canto, 2nd Chapter, Verse 35, it is stated that man's fearfulness is due to his material conception of life and is due to his forgetfulness of his eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord. Therefore he finds himself having only perverted memories—such things have happened due to the spell of material energy. Therefore a person with enough intelligence will engage himself in full devotional service with the Supreme Lord as his spiritual master and worshipable God. The purport is, nobody can attain a revolution without being engaged in devotional service of the Lord. When, however, he is free from material contamination, he can fully engage himself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.*

—TLC

13. *Unless one is in uncontaminated goodness it is very difficult to understand Lord Caitanya as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.*

—TLC

14. *harer nāma harer nāma
 harer nāmaiva kevalam
 kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
 nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is to chant the holy name of the Lord, and there is no other means for success.

—Bṛhan-nārādīya Purāṇa

15. *Śrī Thākura Narottama dāsa says as follows, "When will there be a transcendental vibration all over my body simply by attending to the name of Gaurāṅga, when will there be incessant flowing of my tears simply by uttering Hari Hari of the Lord? When will Lord*

Nityānanda be merciful upon me, and all my desires for material enjoyment become insignificant? When shall I be purified by giving up all contamination of material enjoyment and when shall I be eager to accept the six Gosvāmīs as my prime guidance and when shall I be able to understand the conjugal love of Kṛṣṇa?" In other words, nobody should be eager to understand the conjugal love of Kṛṣṇa without undergoing disciplinary training under the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

—TLC

16. . . . the holy name of Kṛṣṇa has a specific influence on anyone who chants this mahā-mantra; he can attain the stage of love of Godhead, or intensified bhāva. Such love of Godhead is the ultimate goal of human necessity. When one compares this love of Godhead with other necessities of the human society, namely religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation, they are compared as insignificant. When one is absorbed in the temporary designative existence, at that time one is hankering after sense gratification or liberation. But love of Godhead is the eternal nature of the soul; it is unchangeable, unbeginning, and it has no end, therefore temporary sense gratification or a desire for liberation cannot compare with the transcendental nature of love of God. This love of God is called the fifth dimension of the human goal of life.

—TLC, 2nd part

Even a beginner, after receiving initiation in the holy name, is empowered to preach pure love of God as the ultimate goal of life. *Śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam*. Even the beginner takes directly to Kṛṣṇa as the means to the end. There is no other way or means to Kṛṣṇa but Kṛṣṇa Himself—in His name, by hearing, chanting, and remembering Viṣṇu.

The false display of the Christmas season doesn't reveal Christ. The cars rush back and forth, and families gather, but it is very hard to understand the pure self or the Supreme Person (or to understand the mission of His empowered sons and prophets) unless one is in pure goodness. Chanting the holy name is the only way of success in this age, and that also has to be done under vow in *paramparā*.

From W.B. Yeats:

SECOND COMING

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

the blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere
 the ceremony of innocence is drowned . . .
 that twenty centuries of stony sleep
 were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
 and what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

If we observe Christmas in the original spirit—and by Prabhupāda’s grace we do, with an auspicious gathering in the temple for *kīrtana*, festival, initiation, Christmas *prasādam*, association of devotees—we are participating in the spirit of Christmas as much as the devout Christian.

December 26

Yesterday all my energies went into the two lectures and temple appearances. It went well, especially in the evening with hundreds of devotees gathered and lively questions and answers. When I asserted that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very rare and auspicious and yet by Lord Caitanya’s mercy, it has been made easily attainable, Muralīvādaka dāsa raised a doubt. He said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was also very difficult. I acknowledged that the ultimate goal, *prema-bhakti*, was indeed very difficult. Prabhupāda has even said that we should not expect to reach the same success as great ācāryas like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, or those in the purest mood of love for Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Such perfection is not possible for us. We should pray, as Lord Caitanya has directed us, *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena* . . . considering ourselves lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than a tree; in such a state of mind we can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa constantly.

In my talk with Śeṣa in the park, he asked me what role I intended to play in the Society next year. I told him that I would gradually try to return to duties that I had before my physical breakdown. I used to travel every two or three days from one city to another, and once in a temple, I would meet with the temple president, as well as Godbrothers and disciples, mostly for counseling and trying to fulfill the duties of G.B.C. I traveled over the wide area which is my zone of responsibility, northeastern U.S.A., Caribbean, Ireland, and the annual trip to India. So I would try to

resume these duties, but gradually.

Then I told Śeṣa that I also will not allow myself to be so overcome by the demands of others for personal meetings as I was in the past. I am planning for this, not only for reasons of immediate physical strength, but also because I know I cannot take as much as I did previously, and also because of my inclination to write and to sometimes be alone to think about writing. Śeṣa approved of my doing whatever I thought was best, and brought up a favorite theme of his, that we should each accept each other for what we actually are. We should not play roles. He said that if I actually was convinced of what was the best service I could do, I should do it, and thus I would become “self-effulgent.” In other words, he recognized that if one actually asserts himself as he is, rather than try to play roles, he can become a pure devotee.

Role playing, in its most artificial sense, usually results in the destruction of the person who attempts it. It is usually attempted out of some false sense of pride, or maybe out of an unthinking, slavish following. Of course, whatever I do sets an example. So I have been carefully evolving and thinking out how to act; I first have to convince myself before I sell it to others. Śeṣa’s encouragement was exhilarating, and yet sober. Let us be who we are at heart, let us serve Prabhupāda by our propensities and try to give him everything we have. Before our life is over, let us be able to give our full love and creativity to this movement from the wholeness of our personality, and without a grudge, in surrender.

Today I have two meetings, one with Ādi-keśava about BTG, and one with Ravīndra-svarūpa about his writings, and then we return to Gītā-nāgarī. I only wish I had been able to write some poems while here. For me, they are the special nectar and quintessence of writing, and I especially wish to offer them to others.

December 27

Dr. Sarma advises to take it easy for a week and even to allow writing to drop off. I have to admit he’s right in the sense that my main priority should be to return to physical fitness for serving Prabhupāda. That fitness still eludes me. My trip to Phila-

delphia was more successful than the Boston Vyāsa-pūjā, but still my co-workers could hardly imagine how weak I felt, and how subnormal I am for taking on anything resembling regular duties. A one hour meeting with a friend still exhausts me. Therefore, it doesn't seem right to spend my last month of recuperation at Gītā-nāgarī in intense writing. At least the next ten days are supposed to be free of schedules for writing and reading, but devoted to the rhythm of exercise followed by rest. The mind should be always engaged in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, hearing Prabhupāda, but at least for this period I will try to put off everything else.

Walking early this morning, I listened to Prabhupāda on a tape and tried merging into the hearing process. He discussed Queen Kuntī's prayer that she might be cut off in her affection for her family. "A peculiar prayer," Prabhupāda called it. Hearing the words of my spiritual master, I departed from the here-and-now. That is the goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to become free of material attachments to the body, family, and place and to realize eternal time in relation to Kṛṣṇa. Of course, our ISKCON duties are also transcendental, but sometimes, as in my case, one's nervous system becomes overwhelmed and one has to rest. But that rest should also be within the shelter of Kṛṣṇa.

Before taking a breakfast of apples, while contemplating how many of them I will eat, a tape of disciples reading *Bhāgavatam* speaks timely into my ear and mind: "In other words, overeating is not at all recommended for one who wants to progress in spiritual life. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī also warns that too much eating and too much endeavor (*atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś ca*) are against the principles by which one can advance in spiritual life" (purport, *Bhāg.* 4.23.5).

I am not much of a monk
(electric-blanketed)
or a fiery preacher

(at home in the woods)
 but I am servant of my master
 who has planted in my heart
 the seed of love of God.
 So I am qualified to speak.

December 28

SECOND DAY OF REST WEEK

I remember a statement by the Zen popularizer Alan Watts. He said that if you are in the kitchen peeling potatoes and talking about God, Zen is the peeling of the potatoes. But it occurs to me this morning that real God consciousness is found in the hearing itself. Of course, whatever we do for Kṛṣṇa with our senses is also absolute. But as I sat on an overturned oil can in the woods, looking up at the bright morning moon, and at the same time hearing Prabhupāda talk on a tape about life after death—the real spiritual essence was the hearing. Had it not been for Prabhupāda's pure sound vibration in my ear, I could have felt some essence of existence in the combination of moon-watching, cold morning air, and other bodily and mental sensations. I could have tuned myself into nature in different ways and speculated toward the skies and in relation to my body. But I would not have attained even to the ABCs of knowledge.

The message I heard this morning was Prabhupāda's assertion that even big, big men in this material world do not know there is life after death. He said he had spoken with a Lord Brockway of England, asking him what about death. The lord, although an old man in his eighties, simply said, "I shall die peacefully." Prabhupāda also recalled his talk with Professor Kotovsky, who although a supposedly learned man, said there was no life after death. I too am in ignorance, except for the pure sound vibration of the realized spiritual master. Therefore, while natural settings and intuitions of immortality received through nature form a pleasing background for ecstasy, the real substance is transcendental sound vibration. My haiku friends may differ with me on this, but what can I say? I am after more than "haiku moments," both for myself and for others with

whom I want to share and help.

Winter morn:
intent on hearing Vedic sound,
while looking at the moon.

17. It appears from the talks of Lord Caitanya that a person who cannot keep his faith in the words of the spiritual master and thus acts independent, cannot ever attain the desired success in the matter of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. In the Vedic literature, it is said that one who has got unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord and similar faith in his spiritual master, for him the import of the transcendental literature becomes revealed. Lord Caitanya firmly believed in this statement of his spiritual master and he never stopped his saṅkīrtana movement by neglecting the instruction of his spiritual master.

— from TLC, Part 2

18. Śāṅkara has not given so much importance to the omkāra. It is found, however, in the Vedas and in the Rāmāyaṇa and in the Purāṇas and in the Mahābhārata, from the beginning to the end and in the middle, everywhere—the glories of the Supreme Lord, Supreme Personality of Godhead are declared.

—TLC

19. To accept the Supreme as impersonal is to deny the manifestation of spiritual energies. When the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Brahman, is full with spiritual energies and somebody therefore simply accepts His impersonal exhibition of spiritual energy, then he does not accept this Absolute Truth in full. Accept it in full means to accept the spiritual variegatedness also which is transcendental to the material modes of nature. . . . The approved method of understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the path of devotional service, as confirmed in every Vedic literature.

—TLC

Śrīla Prabhupāda began *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* in the beginning of 1967, and I began typing his dictation tapes in my Lower East Side apartment. It was a source of personal connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda while he was away in California.

Tonight I asked Dāmodara dāsa to read entries 17–19 and ask any questions he might have. On reading number seventeen, he smiled and said it was quite clear. The need for full faith in the spiritual master is certainly a clear doctrine in all the Vedic literature, and it was also clear to us first disciples that without full faith in Prabhupāda there was no question of our knowing Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupāda himself created all of our faith in Kṛṣṇa. Just as he describes Lord Buddha in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport as one who is empowered to create faith in the faithless, so Prabhupāda also had that *śakti*, or how could he have made *kṛṣṇa-bhaktas* from jaded New Yorkers? Happy to find authoritative literature like *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, happy to hear the truth of the spiritual master from my own spiritual master, I wrote down such quotes to help imprint it firmly in the mind.

Dāmodara dāsa asked about the reference to Śaṅkara not giving importance to *omkāra*. Apparently he did not read this or retain it, since it appears from TLC that Śaṅkara stressed *tat tvam asi*, a Vedic slogan which stresses the monistic understanding of Brahman. *Tat tvam asi* means, “You are that too.” By stressing this and de-emphasizing *omkāra*, Śaṅkara neglected the conclusion that *omkāra*, or the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Person, is the ultimate truth of Vedic knowledge. But even the phrase, “You are that too,” should be understood as an appreciation and an address to Kṛṣṇa. *You are that too*; You are the Lord as He incarnates in all the different forms of Nṛsimha, Varāha, Kūrma, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma—You are that too. You are the sun and the moon, You are the taste in water, You are ability in man; You are that too.

In discussing quote nineteen, Dāmodara dāsa expressed a doubt which he said he had heard from a so-called Buddhist. They say that there is nothing but different energies. I replied that the existence of energies leads us logically to the existence of the energetic. To say there are energies without the energetic is to show a poor understanding of the necessity of the energetic. If we research energies, we will find a cause, the energetic. In ordinary life, every son has a father. A degraded man may not

even know his father, but the father exists.

Either by Kṛṣṇa's direct statement in the scripture or by research from material effects back to the causes, a devotee accepts that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme cause. By minute study of the elements, one will come to understand the universe and how it exists in Kṛṣṇa. If one has doubts then he should seek out Kṛṣṇa as the cause until he is satisfied. It is equally valid to simply accept Kṛṣṇa's authoritative statements that He is the cause of all causes. My tendency is to settle up the matter by śāstric authority. But either way—by research or by accepting higher authority—we have to settle up and not be doubtful.

December 29

WALKING

I am waiting for the first light of dawn for a cold stroll. This is the first time in a long time I have felt a hint of physical strength, despite my long-abiding desire to get strength for service.

Healthful ways, such as outdoor walks in the woods, may be dovetailed with spiritual life. I was thinking that when I take up regular duties again I would like to conduct more individual meetings outdoors while walking. Instead of facing off with a person within the confines of a four-walled room, I can hear his problems while looking at Kṛṣṇa's vaster energies of sky and land. If someone comes to see me and says, "I don't want to live with my wife" or "I want a bigger position," I can let the birds and trees hear it also, not just me. And while I will give him suitable attention, I may at the same time allow myself to look at other things. Outdoors also seems to offer inspiration for a humble joint-solution to problems. We are aware that we are not the all-in-all or the ultimate doer, we are small figures in the landscape, trying to serve Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. This walk-meeting is not an absolute method, but since I find my own solitary walks conducive to better thinking, why shouldn't the fresh air and exercise benefit more than one?

Neither is this a replacement for solitary walks. That is a special gift from Kṛṣṇa, to allow us to walk with Him, the *caitya-guru*, and consult with Him in silence, or even talk aloud with

Him while we walk in some solitary place. We are not alone; we are with Kṛṣṇa, but walking alone seems to show us in a direct way that we should consult with Him. We should at least sometimes remove ourselves from other influences, such as family and society, and think, “What does my spiritual master want of me? What does the Lord in the heart want me to do?”

I am wearing no watch nor looking at the clock or calender this week, so I don’t know the hour right now, or the day of the week. It seems that yesterday at this time it was bright enough to walk. To walk and at the same time see the light rising on the woodland objects is a special treat that only comes once a day.

Clouded dawn,
no sun or moon,
but hearing Him.

Listening in the woods:
Kṛṣṇa is a Person,
the source of everything.

20. S.B. 6th Canto, 14th Chapter: “There are many liberated souls and there are many perfected souls, but out of all such liberated and perfected souls, one who is a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the best.” Such devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are always calm and quiet, and their perfection is very rarely to be seen even in millions and millions of persons.

—TLC

We may sometimes become too familiar and take for granted the sublime position of pure knowledge that is given in the Vaiṣṇava texts and elaborated on by Prabhupāda in books like *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. But if, for contrast, we take a look at the literatures of any other religion, we will see how much is missing from them. There is almost always a shortage in personalism, knowledge of the identity of the Supreme Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So we should savor each authentic verse and text, especially appreciating the science of

devotional service as given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as writings based on those scriptures. If we can understand one quote, one verse, or one line of one verse, we may qualify to truly serve the pure devotees as they are described here, and we may follow them back to Godhead.

But look at me, what a rascal! In the attempt to come closer to my spiritual master, I have revived the worship of his *mūrti*. But before we have hardly begun it, I have doubts and hesitations. I think of rejecting the *arcā* worship, even as I fail also to read well or chant well, and even as I falter in doing active devotional service. I am afraid that the Prabhupāda *mūrti* will become a burden as I carry him to distant places. I have begun this worship just to give myself the facility of worshipping his form in different places. But now offensive thoughts come: "Oh, the *mūrti* looks like an idol. Why am I doing it?" And yet, the remedy is to cast these thoughts aside and worship him. I should do that now, and it will cleanse my mind of these thoughts. I should not simply ask my disciples to do this, otherwise it makes no sense. Let me go and bathe Prabhupāda now.

21. It is stated in the Bhagavad-gītā that a person materially contaminated transmigrates to another material body by thinking in material consciousness; at the time of death he thinks in that way and therefore he is transferring to another material body. Similarly when one is situated in pure spiritual identity and thinks of spiritual loving service rendered to the Supreme Lord, he is transferred spiritually into the spiritual kingdom to be entered in the association of Kṛṣṇa. In other words, to think of Kṛṣṇa and His associates in the spiritual identity is the qualification for being transferred to the spiritual kingdom.

—TLC

Just by understanding clearly and with full faith this quote from the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, one can go back to Godhead. It is no wonder I wrote it down, trying to transfer its potency from the typed page of Swamiji's dictation into my own handwriting, into my own prayer book.

Sometimes we think the statements of *śāstra* are exaggeration when they inform us that by reciting a verse or hearing it, we will be granted liberation and pure love of God. But according to *The Nectar of Devotion*, these statements are not imagination, although they may be true for some and not for all. By writing down the verse, memorizing it, treasuring it, sharing it, I will try to make it true for me.

In this particular statement, the effect of negative, material consciousness is also given. You take your choice, negative and positive are sure paths and will be effective. Whatever one thinks of at the time of death, he will get a body like that.

22. Such jñānīs are described as mūḍhas also because they deride at the person of the Supreme Lord for His feature like a human being. They do not know that the blessed human form of life is designed after the eternal and transcendental feature of the Supreme Lord.

—purport, Bg. 7.15

Deriding the person of the Supreme Lord means that one is an ass. If one is deeply indoctrinated into impersonalism, it is very difficult to get out. It may take him many lifetimes until one receives the mercy of the pure devotee. There is no other way to gain conviction in personalism except by meeting and hearing¹ from a realized Vaiṣṇava. Prabhupāda gave us such strong personal association, gave us such loving care, and defeated what Māyāvāda doctrines we had already picked up in our eclectic readings so that by the time I wrote these quotes into my book, I was already one of the budding servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the topmost Vaiṣṇava.

But the test continues today, and so we pray, "I offer my obeisances unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. You are so kindly teaching the message of Lord Caitanya and delivering these Western worlds which are so full of voidism and impersonalism."

Today on National Public Radio I heard a poet say that we are all lonely and that poems are for sharing joy. In the ten minutes air-time he got his points across—that poetry is magic, that it sometimes takes him fifteen years to write the right line, that he lives frugally so he can spend time writing, and that he is one of the best

poets in American haiku. When the announcer said, "You are the foremost haiku poet in America," Nick Virgilio said, "No, God is the foremost." But the same poet in a recent newspaper article stated that a poet has to "do God one better." In other words, God has created nature and reality, which a poet perceives and describes, but in his creations a poet has to go even beyond what God has given in the creation. In this way writers are deluded by their own fertile brains thinking themselves the doer, whereas actually they are all playthings of the material nature.

They do not know that the blessed human form of life is designed after the eternal and transcendental feature of the Supreme Lord. Great Vaiṣṇava poets therefore describe Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings and His pastimes as revealed in their hearts or as heard from the lips of realized souls. Such poetry is appreciated by those who are thoroughly honest. Other poetry is decoration of a dead body.

December 30

After six months I am finally taking milk again, fresh raw milk from a cow named Dwipa. Dr. Sarma has only faint praise for milk, and doesn't recommend boiling milk, which he says boils away vitamins and enzymes. But on this we have to take exception. The hygienists themselves differ from one another, and we differ from them about milk.

Prabhupāda and the Vedic culture give great importance to milk as a primary miracle food. As with any food, milk has to be taken in moderation, but it has special properties to create fine brain tissues for understanding transcendental knowledge. Sages like Śukadeva sometimes drink only milk, and cow protection is largely based on the cows' providing milk which can be transformed into many valuable by-products. For me, addition of milk to my diet is part of a month-long build-up beginning now.

Baladeva just showed me Thoreau's quote about keeping a journal.

Of all strange and unaccountable things this journalizing is the strangest. It will allow nothing to be predicted of it; its good is not

good, nor its bad bad. If I make a huge effort to expose my innermost and richest wares to light, my counter seems cluttered with the meanest homemade stuff; but after months or years I may discover the wealth of India, and whatever rarity is brought overland from Cathay, in that confused heap, and what perhaps seemed a festoon of dried apple or pumpkin will prove a string of Brazilian diamonds, or pearls from Coromandel [ancient India].

—January 29, 1841

How much more a devotee should have faith that if he sets down *paramparā* realizations, records of strivings in devotional service, it will have some lasting value. A devotee's homely wares consist of the affairs of *śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam*. So if he is true to his vows, his record should prove to be like the trail left by one who throws seeds in the woods, which later show others how to pass through uncharted forests.

23. "Prayers of Brahmā," 10th Canto, 14th Chapter. "O the Supreme Personality of Godhead, O the Supersoul, O the Master of all mystery, who can calculate the potency of Your pastimes in this world? You are always situated by expanding Your eternal potency so that nobody can understand You."

This quote comes in the context of the Teachings of Lord Caitanya. This was my first discovery of these wonderful prayers, which Prabhupāda later gave us fully in the *Kṛṣṇa* book and which he often spoke of. The *līlā brahma-vimohana* is very fascinating and instructive. Since even Lord Brahmā was bewildered about the original form of Kṛṣṇa, how foolish are we to deny that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme!

On the page where I have written this quote in my notebook, I have pasted another Viṣṇu form, Saṅkarṣaṇa. Yet it is Kṛṣṇa appearing as a small village boy with yogurt in one hand and flute in His belt who demonstrates to Brahmā that He is the source of all the Viṣṇus and Śivas, and He is the cause of all the elements in all the universes. He grants Brahmā the vision to see how everything is coming from the body of the cowherd boy, Govinda, and there is no doubt about it. Later in his prayers, Brahmā pro-

claims that no one should try to understand the Absolute by impersonal speculation, but one should hear from authorized devotees, and this is the only way to understand knowledge of God.

“Who is Kṛṣṇa?” asked a hippie meditator when Prabhupāda first arrived at his ISKCON New Mexico storefront. “He is the Cowherd Boy in control of the universe,” replied Prabhupāda, and he commenced to give out peanut butter *laḍḍu*. In matters inconceivable, the secret is to accept that our arguments have no jurisdiction; we should accept the version of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, and then everything will be revealed to us.

24. S.B. 1.16.10: *“Lazy human being with paltry intelligence and short duration of life passes away the night exactly by sleeping and daytime by activities meant for nothing.”*

The First Canto occurs in Prabhupāda’s Volume Three of the original three volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which he brought with him to America in 1965. I began reading these books from the start of my association with him in 1966, relishing, although I could not understand it very well. Relishing means to read with faith. I accepted that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and Bhaktivedanta purports were giving the information available from no other source. It was not a collection of myths—it is a description of the spiritual world as well as the explanation of the material world seen from the absolute viewpoint.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī cuts down the materialistic householders and their activities meant for nothing.

*December 31, Disappearance day of
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura*

From our first days with Śrīla Prabhupāda, we heard from him about his Guru Mahārāja. We used to see Guru Mahārāja’s picture and talk appreciatively among ourselves about his appearance—he looked very intelligent, austere, bold. In one picture he wore a beard, and that was a topic of conversation also,

how he was performing special austerities. A few devotees tried to read his difficult, intellectual writing. But mostly we learned of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura from whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda told us in conversations. We heard how he was *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārī* and never married his whole life. He sat up very straight and did not eat very much. He would never talk alone with a woman. He condemned the practice of solitary *bhajana* for a Vaiṣṇava. He said it was cheating to imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura, trying to chant alone and get reputation as a great devotee. A devotee should preach. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī told Śrīla Prabhupāda to go to the West to give the people of the world there Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And it was he who told Prabhupāda to avoid the entanglement of party politics and to somehow or other get money and print books.

Oh evangelic angel . . .
 The line of service
 As drawn by you,
 Is pleasing and healthy
 Like morning dew.
 The oldest of all
 But in new dress
 Miracle done
 Your Divine Grace.

The Departing Year

My front tooth falls out,
 a heifer is born —
 last day of the year.

Submitting to His will,
 off goes the year,
 my time also, irretrievable.

Almost anyone can catch them;
 doomed
 winter flies.

When guns fire at midnight,

I'll answer from my bed,
Hare Kṛṣṇa!

Trusting in Kṛṣṇa, I bid the year farewell. Tomorrow begins
another—for Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana*.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

PRABHUPĀDA MŪRTI

In December, while recommencing personal worship of my Prabhupāda mūrti, I began a private "reform notebook" labeled "Prabhupāda mūrti." What follows are the notes I kept until the end of 1985.

December 15

WE HAVE DECIDED TO WORSHIP Prabhupāda mūrti personally, me and my servants, and wherever we travel, we will take him with us. I want to keep a notebook about this worship, to check myself when I become abusive. Unless I keep up real devotion, there is no use in this worship.

You have to keep coming forward to reciprocate and to remove doubts. Doubt: "After all, I am a preacher. I have taken to the mūrti worship while in recuperation at Gītā-nāgarī, but I will be sorry later, when I have lots of appointments, that I am giving so much time to the worship." And sometimes I will think, "This doesn't really look like him; I can see him in a photo or movie or best, in his books, and don't need this." And, "If you preach his order, that is the real worship." So these are some doubts.

But I think it is increased devotion, that I want this mūrti. And as for the face not looking like him, that is only a matter of my devotion; the more I approach him in love, the more the mūrti will reveal.

Is a mūrti an idol? No, it is himself. There may be many worshipers of the mūrti, but I have to do it myself; it is entirely personal, and the more you do it with love, the more he will reveal himself in this particular form. You have to actually have faith and devotion in this form.

And I do want it. I may fade in this devotion, but that is my fault, not the fault of the mūrti.

And I want to worship him and go back to him. It will help. I

want to dream of him, I want him to talk to me, I want to be satisfied being his menial servant and writing about him. He will help me with this and with other desires to approach him. This person, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I want to be his servant.

The other doubts I can overcome. As long as possible, and as much as possible, I will bathe and dress him and feed him. When, in the course of duty to him, I have to do something else and cannot do *pūjā*, then I will let the servants do it. That is also their service as my disciples, to help me worship my spiritual master. They will like it. So it is important service for me personally and when I am otherwise engaged it is important for my disciples. I have started this notebook for my own use, to help me keep up the *utsāha*. Record here every day if possible, directly about the *mūrti* worship.

You hit him hard with your hand, you pulled hard on his side with his jersey, you pulled the jersey over his nose until it tugged hard. Any one of those things could conceivably have caused him damage. They were done out of passion of the moment, thoughtlessness. So how can you worship if you get these little angers and push and shove the *mūrti*? So I want to write down the negative things you did. And the negative thoughts you had, that his nose is too broad, that it doesn't look like him.

And the positive ways to improve your own attitude and improve the situation so he looks nice, is dressed nice, etc., worshiped nicely.

For my own sake—Prabhupāda doesn't need it, he has appeared in *this* form to be massaged, because I want to be closer to him.

It's nice to have lots of *cādars* for Prabhupāda so that I can increase my devotion by pleasingly placing a new one on his shoulders every day.

I really want to see him. I forget what he looked like, or do not love what he was, and how he looked—not that the *mūrti* is poor in that regard. It's a good likeness, but of course it falls short. *But as you are more patient and devoted you will see his*

features more in the mūrti—and love them and remember them in other forms as well—his personal features, words, teachings, etc.

Mūrti—it is not a doll house game of miniature. Remember you are dealing with Prabhupāda. Be serious if you want to see him.

Be careful not to bump his head. If your body feels tired, still, do things carefully. Don't be hasty or lazy. Take care everything looks nice—the folded pleat of his *dhotī*, the *cādar*— and look reverentially at his face and his lotus feet, compose whatever sincere spontaneous prayer is in your mind, beg forgiveness, ask to be allowed to keep approaching him.

When moving him or moving clothes across his body, never force things. Don't break him.

It is preaching, because you want to be his pure devotee. This worship, instead of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa for you, is your assertion that you want to go BACK TO PRABHUPĀDA. For me, back to Prabhupāda is my way back to Godhead. It is my theological assertion and my own true belief. I did meet him, I am honoring that rare contact with the pure devotee, the *mahā* pure devotee, and I am therefore worshiping his form.

See the *śāstra* for how you worship the *mūrti* of the *guru*. Do it also your own way, but be reinforced that this is *paramparā* worship. So if you look at him and Lord Jagannātha and attain some devotion, what is wrong in that? At the same time, do your other duties in his service.

Pāñcarātrika and *Bhāgavata-viddhi*. Read in his presence, do his duty, and take care of his *mūrti* directly in A.M. and night and midday, and have your disciples help in this.

December 16

First *darśana* of A.M. —I anticipated it, didn't want that shock of my unloving glance, so I looked mostly only at his feet. Better.

Glance at him at different times, trying to see the features I once saw and the sweet glance from him. (Why do I always look

for kindness—am I so afraid of his reprimand that I'll criticize him for it? Afraid to surrender?)

But "Don't try to see him, act in such a way that he'll see you." But *mūrti* is for seeing.

When deliberate seeing feels incomplete, I think, "You need also to come close to the *mūrti*— to actually touch, dress, etc. — before you feel closer."

And—"Even if not now, another time."

And—"By service he'll exchange."

And—"Doesn't matter what others think."

And—"Even if his picture is no longer complete."

Separation.

Keep worshipping.

He is a statue but he is Prabhupāda.

Take care of carrying him.

Yes, sometimes it will seem this way.

Someone writes to me, "My beloved spiritual master." But I may not be worthy of it. Therefore, it is also for purification from being treated as such an exalted person, and accepting it, that I take my real place as Prabhupāda's servant and massage him daily, and bow, and bathe.

We saw a Bengali film of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In it, Viṣṇupriyā was worshipping a *mūrti* of her beloved Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He was her husband and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. She was singing "*bhaja gaurāṅga*." She was in great ecstasy of separation from Him. So we have the deity of Prabhupāda to increase our feeling of separation from him. But actually I do not have that ecstasy. I think: It was so very long ago that I massaged him as servant and smelled the mustard oil and touched him, and even then my love was not very great. I almost forget who he was except in the ways of separation. We have known him almost as long since his disappearance as the time he was with us.

The deity is Prabhupāda himself. It is not merely a symbol of the real person. And yet we in a sense do this direct personal

service to the deity, as symbolic to the service we did to him when here—and it is an expression of our desire that we may massage him and be servant to that original form, although this may not be possible again. We do it in remembrance. We do it in the present moment of satisfaction to the deity form, and we do it in some prayer—hope to return to that again.

Do I actually want to be his servant again? Yes—I want to erase also my forgetfulness. I want to be his servant this time in a more surrendered way.

While bathing the deity today, I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say one cannot see the Lord or the Vaiṣṇava. He comes to earth but people cannot see Him. As the Kumāras come, but people don't recognize their worth, Candrasekhara didn't recognize Sanātana Gosvāmī. One has to have his senses purified. So I cannot recognize that Prabhupāda is present and is worshipable in the deity. I am trying, and worshiping, but I should know this is the reason for doubts and for lack of *bhakti* in regard to the *mūrti* worship.

Even if I am a preacher, why should I not want to massage him? Didn't even his big preacher disciples like to do this if they could? Isn't it right? Isn't it a humble way? And besides, I am not a great one, I want to be the servant of the great one. Servant by writing, yes, and do other preaching service, but by this, by this.

December 17, Oḍana-saṣṭhī

Warm cloth for the deity. Prabhupāda, I come to you for refuge.

A follower of another *guru* wrote and said three of them dreamt I was dead. They say I am dead from separation from Prabhupāda and that is why they dreamt it. They say I should go and surrender to their *guru*.

Yes, I may be suffering in separation from Prabhupāda, but the remedy is not to go to someone else but to go more to him, and that I am trying to do in part by the deity worship.

Prabhupāda *mūrti*, being near you was always safe. If there was politics or fear of the material world, certainly to be by you was best. You would say everything is all right because you

could see Kṛṣṇa, and we trusted you could. Now we have to face the troubles on your behalf, and not always be your oil-smearing secretary.

But there is time for that too, daily, and I want to worship you like that, in that shelter. I am not a big preacher. I need to come, when the world is too heavy, and be by your side; and as your servant, know everything is all right in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Assured from that point.

Yes, I should think I actually have come to clothe and feed him. It is not just a doll game. It is also not just looking at him. Nor is it karma-kāṇḍīya, that he will reward me with something else.

But I do it for service. He accepts the service to him as arcā and it is complete there.

Words of devotion, but today I forget to put Prabhupāda to rest in bed after lunch. I remember it now at 4:35 P.M. and decide to skip it. Neglect.

December 18

In āraṭi—3 circles to Śrīla Prabhupāda

1 to Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu

1 each to Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā, Balarāma

Dr. S. said Śrīla Prabhupāda's little bead bag was "cute." Of course I don't like to think that. Grave he is, neat he is—he *should* look just like Śrīla Prabhupāda—attractive he is, but not like a miniature doll.

Also, since starting the worship, maybe I have minimized Lord Jagannātha or thought of Him as a little toy. He's God, Bhagavān, not little. Sometimes They seem like little children. That's a different thing if it is felt in love. So take care to respect Them as Supreme and worshipable Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, and Subhadrā as worshiped by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

My worship is conducted in a temple where Śrīla Prabhupāda is the founder-ācārya. These are his Deities and I worship him and then Them in *paramparā*.

I pray he will keep me steadfast and in right consciousness.

December 23

I went through an emotional reaction thinking what a burden it will be to carry Prabhupāda and give time each day to his worship. Partly it came after Dr. S. told me one of his grandfather's maxims, "to be light, not have possessions," and when he traveled he had only a small bag. Anyway, I went through it and still want to do it.

I said to B., we already travel with lots of things in car or plane, so even if I don't take the deity, we would take the spinal bath, mattress, and so many things. There will be emergencies when we may have to leave the deity in a temple or something.

Part of the feelings resulted in my thinking that my assistants will have to be *pūjārīs* and do the work daily, sometimes morning and noon. And carrying will have to go on in two suitcases.

D. just came in and put the breakfast plate for Śrīla Prabhupāda down and then hesitated. I am fasting. A little nervous around food. I thought: he isn't sure whether to offer the food himself or ask me. I want to keep writing, why doesn't he just do it? And yet I want to do it to prove my devotion to Prabhupāda.

So D. asked and, with annoyance showing in my face, I said, "I will do it," and so I went and bowed down with some initial reluctance. This is not very good. Settle it up and do it right.

Today B. starts seriously planning the carrying case. It will not be done in time for our first travel in a few days, but we may take Śrīla Prabhupāda anyway, on our laps, to Philly. Prabhupāda, please help us worship you and overcome reluctance. I want my writing time, etc., but I want this too. I have to find time to do it all with my men, and not be reluctant and swayed by others.

My writing here is to Prabhupāda and about Prabhupāda in the specific *arcā-vigraha* of my *mūrti*. Sometimes I will speak of him in his other appearances, but the main point is to write of him for focusing on the worship we are doing. Thus I speak of getting him clothes and how well we care for and travel with him.

Today we traveled with him to Philly although we don't have

the carrying case ready yet. It went well in the car with him.

Tonight I thought once: he is a statue and he doesn't look like a real person right now. But then I thought: this is Prabhupāda *mūrti*. Even Prabhupāda in so-called flesh and blood is not the complete Prabhupāda, since he is also present in his books, in his followers, and in his teachings. So I should not be disappointed by his being a statue. It is him, in this form, and he has appeared to take a specific kind of service from us in this way. It is mostly the *pūjā*, the food, the dressing, the service of servant that I do. He will exchange the more we give good service. So let us do it nicely with the morning *ārati*, etc.

It is not sentimental of you to try to increase your specific care for him in this form, and to think of him in this way. You know he appears in many ways, but you have to give some time to this form. Just as you sometimes read his books, sometimes worship different *mūrtis* of him, do his BTG, etc. — and it is all him — so this is him in a special way and is the same Prabhupāda.

Sorry to belabor the point, but I want to be clear.

He should have first-class clothes—V-neck cashmere sweater in pleasing hues fit for a *sannyāsī*—just like he actually wore, not a tailor's concoction. And best wool *cādars* or silk and varied sets of clothes to enliven the worship and please us to offer him, and he looks nice. Meditate on how and where to obtain such things.

I'd like to avoid dealing with a woman to make these so we'll see what we can do.

All glories to Prabhupāda, the great preacher and worshiper of Kṛṣṇa. I also want to preach on his behalf, not "stuck up in Deity worship" like a *prākṛta-bhakta*—but if I worship the preacher, he will bless me to preach also.

December 24

If on any occasion the Prabhupāda *mūrti's darśana* doesn't satisfy me, it is for the same reasons other bona fide *darśanas* of

Śrīla Prabhupāda don't move me—my lack of devotion. He is not an idol, an ordinary book, an ordinary man.

I think I know it all regarding sentimentality and how it is to be avoided. I cleverly distinguish, as I learned in college English, between the words sentiment and sentimental. But I think I really don't know it all—in regards to loving exchanges and surrender with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Noon

Just about to begin *pūjā*. Articles on hand:

bath bowl and water

conch, ladle

3 towels

ācamana

mustard oil

new set of clothes

Now begin, hearing tape, dedicating yourself to serve your spiritual master.

It was very nice. I felt it was the perfection of my life today during the noon *pūjā*. I was refreshed from bath, *tilaka*, and Prabhupāda was seated at a height comfortable for me to deal with, and Dāmodara had arranged all the paraphernalia to make it easy for me. So as I began, I felt like a *brāhmaṇa* or worshiper in an ideal state.

While bathing and massaging Prabhupāda I thought, "You are often praying, but what do you want further than this? Is not this perfection?" Yes, and so I am grateful and my wish today was simply that I may be able to always continue this service. It is not a means to a different end. But by worshiping and improving in this worship, I may actually come to a realization of what a wonderful act it is and then I may graduate either in this or other activities of direct service to him.

Question: Is it the same absolute as in worshiping Kṛṣṇa mūrti? Yes. Kṛṣṇa is God and the pure devotee, Prabhupāda,

is His direct servant. As Kṛṣṇa expands into *arcā-vigraha* by His omnipotence, the Lord empowers the pure devotee to do so. It is by the same spiritual energy, conducted by the Lord. The worshiper chooses how to approach Kṛṣṇa in a particular Deity form out of His innumerable forms which are actual eternal forms like Govinda, Rāma, Nṛsimha The pure devotee like Hanumān may also be worshiped in the right mood. And so we have accepted to worship the pure devotee spiritual master, as authorized by him in *paramparā*. It is nondifferent in absolute nature with other authorized Deity worship.

APPENDIX 2

PREACHING AND THE DYNAMICS OF KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUS POETRY by Dattātreyā dāsa Brahmācārī

LORD KṚṢṆA EXPLAINS in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that knowledge in the mode of goodness means seeing the undivided within the divided (Bg. 18.20). Good lyric poetry leads the reader to intuit unity among ambiguously related or seemingly disparate elements, and the more comprehensive the unity is, the better the poem. This dynamic by which the reader moves toward the underlying unity of the poem's parts is well demonstrated in Gurupāda's poem sequence, "Book Buying":

Book buying:
the price is high
but I want them.

Relaxed, philosophical
Swamiji appears
as if he'll never leave.

"Sit down."
I can't—
but the books.

Walking fast
through city streets
with three big books.

If a reader did not know anything about Śrīla Prabhupāda or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, how might he understand these stanzas?

If he is an attentive reader, he will see that Swamiji is the bookseller. And even though he may not know anything of Swamiji, from this poem the reader would perceive him to be a

force of depth and immutability (philosophical/ Swamiji appears/ as if he'll never leave./ "Sit down."). The reader would see the protagonist of the poem (the person buying the book) to be a busy person, concerned about the money he spends, a reader who appreciates intelligent company. These elements would not be explicitly or discursively present in the reader's mind as he moves quickly through the short stanzas of the poem; rather, the stanzas just provide a few hints of Gurupāda and Prabhupāda and their relationship.

The final stanza (Walking fast/ through city streets/ with three big books.) creates a feeling of exhilaration and freedom and happiness. "Ah, this is the really important thing," the reader thinks, "these big valuable books, and we have them now and nothing can stop us and we're on our way!" This is exactly how lyric poetry should move. It is pure and clean and unencumbered. Its thought and movement subtly lead the reader to feel the importance of the exchange and the relationship. He feels sympathy and enthusiasm and becomes curious to know more.

The dynamic by which a good poem reveals unities and inherent relationships is also essential to the preaching of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Does not preaching mean revealing the original, pure relationship between the living entity and Kṛṣṇa (and, subsequently, all natural phenomena)? Almost everyone today is living in ignorance of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. People do not feel their relationship with Him. When that ambiguity, that lack of clarity, is removed, the living entity experiences transcendental happiness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And because poetry means nothing in the absence of the revelatory dynamic, poems are perfect vehicles for the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (Indeed, each verse of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is a poem revealing the hidden relationship between the *jīva* and Kṛṣṇa, and the more we surrender to those transcendental sounds, the more the hearing of Kṛṣṇa conscious poetry becomes our life and soul.)

Now, is it necessary to always mention Kṛṣṇa Himself in every poem? Not at all. The relationship between a preacher and

the nondevotee need not be one whereby the preacher stands over on one side and preaches while the nondevotee stands over on the other side and “gets preached to.” Rather, the preacher judges carefully in accordance with time, place, and circumstance and then skillfully draws out the nondevotee’s original attraction for Kṛṣṇa. To require every poem to mention Kṛṣṇa by name is like requiring every preacher to say to every guest at a Sunday feast, “So, when are you going to shave up?” No. To understand just when and how to mention Kṛṣṇa in Kṛṣṇa conscious poetry (and to thereby expand the preaching to the fullest extent) requires subtle aesthetic judgement, and to understand such poetry requires patience and honesty.

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