

December 24, 2018

Free Write Journal #22

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Tonight, Christmas Eve, we are going to a neighborhood gathering of devotees at Saci-suta's house. It is mostly a social event, no lecturing and maybe even no kirtana. Just exchanges of gifts and honoring of prasadam. All grhasthas with children. It is a friendly group with no pressure, and all devotees. Last year I was sitting close to Kaulini and her boyfriend, who were engaged in open loveplay. This year I'm going to keep my distance, and Baladeva is going to ask Kaulini to "chill" it. Baladeva and I have gathered many presents, and we have gift-wrapped them and will give them out tonight.

I received the book distribution report from Nitai in India. He and his wife, Vraja-pyari (a disciple of Radhanatha Maharaja) and their two children attended Radhanatha Maharaja's yatra at Jagannatha Puri with seven thousand of Maharaja's followers. Nitai set up a small stall and sold 142 books in varieties of titles. Before coming to Puri, Vraja-pyari visited Vrndavana and sold 138 of my books to the bookseller Rasbihari-Lal. I am grateful and proud of Nitai, Vraja-pyari and their seven-year-old daughter Gopi for their endeavors.

Manohara lent me his copy of Bhurijana's book The Backward Glance: A Detailed Overview of Srimad-

Bhagavatam, Cantos Eleven and Twelve. I am finding it a wonderful read. Bhurijana has gathered all the sources, including the BBT's presentation of the two Cantos, direct quotes from the acaryas, quotes from Srila Prabhupada's lectures, and he has organized them and added his own voice. In his entire series of overviews of the Cantos, Bhurijana has proven himself a deep student and master of Srimad-Bhagavatam.

*** December 25, 2018

The Christmas Eve gathering last night went all right. But I was in a fault-finding mood. In my mind I was cynical to almost everyone there, even the little dog. Later I felt ashamed. My attitude was equal to Vaisnava aparadha. I preached to my mind to see everyone with kind eyes. This reminded me of my encounter with Vrndavana some years ago. For a while, I was critical of the external side of the dhama, the dirtiness, the population of mischievous monkeys, etc. But then I changed my view and prayed to see everything in Vrndavana with kind eyes. It mostly worked, and I was freed from dhama-aparadha. Similarly, I forgive myself from the mental

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faultfinding last night. They were a nice, inoffensive gathering of devotees. Even Kaulini and her boyfriend acted civilly in social company.

There was a generous exchange of presents, and many devotees were surprised and happy with their gifts. (I received a winter coat and a photo of Radha-Govinda.) Keli-lalita served delicious prasadam, and everyone took it to their “full satisfaction.”

I stayed about an hour and a half, then returned to my quiet schedule.

See if you can free write. When Lord Caitanya returned to Jagannatha Puri after His tour of southern India, many devotees joined Him. Svarupa Damodara and Govinda became His secretary and personal servant. The sannyasis Brahmananda Bharati and Paramananda Puri came to join Him, and Lord Caitanya offered them obeisances because they were initiated by Madhavendra Puri. Bhavananda Raya came to visit with four of his sons. Caitanya Mahaprabhu told Bhavananda Raya that he was extremely fortunate because his oldest son, Ramananda Raya, was a great jewel of a devotee. Lord Caitanya said He was eagerly awaiting the arrival of Ramananda Raya, who had offered to give up his service as governor and come live with Him in Nilacala. Other devotees came to visit or live with Him in Jagannatha Puri. He told them all of His encounters on His tour of

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South India. Millions of people had been converted from their speculative religions just by hearing and seeing Lord Caitanya chanting the holy names of Krsna and by observing the ecstatic bodily symptoms. Practically the

whole of South India had now become Vaisnavas. News was carried to Navadvipa that Lord Caitanya had returned to Puri, and all of His devotees became enlivened. They gathered at Advaita Acarya's house in Santipura and planned to travel to Jagannatha Puri to be with Lord Caitanya.

We are spending a quiet Christmas. Manohara is preparing an Italian dinner. Baladeva and Krsna dasi are out shopping for more presents for Krsna dasi's grownup children.

Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should think of Him always (man-mana-bhava mad bhakto). Take shelter of His lotus feet. Be confident that He will protect you. Pray to think of Him at the time of your death. Chant Hare Krsna like a child crying for its mother.

We exchanged more Christmas gifts after lunch. I received a bathroom scale, Danvantari received two dress shirts to wear to college, Krsna dasi and Rasesvari received warm pants, Manohara received a cooking utensil. Ravindra Svarupa came over and brought some cookies made by Saudamani. Haryasva phoned and sang us some Nat King Cole Christmas songs, which we all heard over the speakerphone. Rev. John Endler (Bhaktijana) is holding two special services at his church today.

In our C.c. reading we heard of Lord Caitanya's Navadvipa devotees arriving in Jagannatha Puri.

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya and King Prataparudra go to the roof of the palace and Gopinatha Acarya identifies the devotees to them. They are astounded to watch the kirtana of the Bengali devotees. Sarvabhauma asks, “Why are the devotees first going to see Lord Caitanya and not going first to see Lord Jagannatha in the temple?” He also asks, “Why aren’t the devotees observing the etiquette of

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visiting a holy place by first fasting and then shaving their heads?” Gopinatha Acarya replies that these etiquettes apply to ordinary pilgrims, but Lord Caitanya’s devotees are acting on the platform of spontaneous love.

*** December 26, 2018

They gave me a framed photo of Radha-Govinda in a favorite green dress. Radharani’s face is too dark, but otherwise it is all right. I placed the photo near me on the bed and received an hour’s darsana while Baladeva massaged my feet. (My feet were not pointing at Them.) I find it easier to relate to Radha-Govinda than to the photo of Radha-Madhava at Mayapura. Both are spiritual arca-vigraha, and I try to see Them with purified eyes and mind. I don’t see Them as material objects. Then I come into the outer room, sit in my chair and take darsana of the actual Deities-- Radha-Govinda, Srila Prabhupada, Gauranga, Lord Nrsimha and Tulasi- devi-- while I finish my sixteen rounds.

Then it is time for writing. Think of Bhurijana's overview of the Eleventh Canto, where everything leads to bhakti as the only worthwhile goal. So much evidence from the acaryas and sastras!

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A devotee wrote me and said I was her first temple president and I engaged her as my secretary. I don't remember the relationship, but she quoted a wonderful exchange between myself and Srila Prabhupada:

[Me]: "I am treasuring the remembrance of my great fortune in personally serving you as your secretary, and I hope my service was not too much of an inconvenience to you, as I am a dull-headed fool looking only for sense-gratification even in devotional service, praying to improve."

[Srila Prabhupada]: "I was not at all inconvenienced by you; on the contrary I say you were the best secretary and you did your work most faithfully. I appreciate it, may Krsna bless you. Yes! Before the spiritual master, a dull-headed fool is required; an over-intelligent disciple is not a very good qualification. Even Caitanya Mahaprabhu presented Himself as a dull-headed fool in front of His spiritual master and faithfully chanted Hare Krsna."

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I did not remember this exchange of letters from many years ago until Sukada sent it to me a week ago. Now I taste the bliss of his appreciation of my service. Prabhupada several times said I was not a good manager, but here he says that I was “the best secretary.” I confessed to Prabhupada that I was looking for sense gratification even in devotional service. He answered, “Yes!” with an exclamation point to emphasize that being a fool before the spiritual master was a requirement. Even Lord Caitanya was considered a fool by His spiritual master and told to chant Hare Krsna. I was in good company! Sukada said Prabhupada frequently sent me letters of encouragement. Regarding the “secretary letters,” Sukada wrote, “What a beautiful and humble exchange between a disciple and spiritual master. I consider myself very fortunate to have had Satsvarupa Prabhu as my first temple president.” I thank Sukada for preserving these letters and sending them to me with fond memories.

The devotees of Lord Caitanya praise the devotion of King Prataparudra and present his strong desire to have an audience with the Lord. Caitanya Mahaprabhu becomes softened by their entreaties but remains outwardly adamant that He cannot meet the King. Then the Lord says He would be willing to meet the King’s son. The Prince is approaching

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youth, and he has a beautiful bluish complexion. With his dress and ornaments, he reminds one of Krsna. Lord

Caitanya touches his body, and the Prince manifests symptoms of devotional ecstasy. He is immediately transformed from an ordinary Prince into a pure devotee of Krsna and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The Lord asks the Prince to come and see Him every day. He becomes one of Caitanya Mahaprabhu's close companions. When the Prince goes home and embraces his father, the King also manifests all the symptoms of bodily ecstasy. There is more mercy to come for King Prataparudra.

The portrait of Prataparudra takes up much space in C.c. When the devotees hear that Prataparudra is willing to renounce his kingdom if he cannot get an interview with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, they become sympathetic and try to intercede on his behalf. Ramananda Raya was a governor, so he knew diplomacy and used it on the King's behalf by speaking of Prataparudra's good qualities and softening up Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Lord Nityananda requested Lord Caitanya to give an outer garment to the King, and he worshiped the cloth as Lord Caitanya Himself. Then Mahaprabhu allowed the King's son to see Him, and the Prince became a pure devotee of the Lord. At the Ratha-Yatra festival, Lord

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Caitanya was very pleased to see the King using a broom to sweep the road before Lord Jagannatha. King Prataparudra was the ruler of Orissa, but he took up menial service for Lord Caitanya. Dancing before the carts, Lord Caitanya divided His devotees into seven kirtana parties. The Lord then performed a miracle; He

expanded Himself into seven forms and entered within each party. The devotees within each group thought Lord Caitanya was within their group only and did not leave. No one could see the miracle except a few of the Lord's confidential associates, but King Prataparudra could also see the miracle of Mahaprabhu's seven expanding forms! And there was more mercy to come.

We didn't have a white Christmas. There was some snowfall overnight on the 23rd and on the morning of Christmas Eve there was snow on the ground. But it melted away during the day, and no more snow passed. Bhakti-rasa asked his nine-year-old son if he knew of Bing Crosby's song "White Christmas," and Howard said yes. Bhakti-rasa and his wife are divorced, and both parents have equal access time with Howard. The two older children are alienated from their mother, but Howard seems to enjoy the equal-time policy. This reminds me of a sitcom series where a young boy is informed that his parents are getting divorced. The boy cries out,

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"Oh, boy! Two Christmases!" Howard is something like that. He gets to stay at his father's house on Christmas morning, but in the afternoon and evening he goes to his mother's house. Plenty of presents. He doesn't seem to think it strange that his mother and father are competing for his love. As he grows up, he may think it is strange. This is one of those confidential things I can

write about because no one involved is reading the Journal.

*** December 27, 2018

The bathroom scale I received at Christmas doesn't work. The black- buttoned sweater I received isn't my style. I don't know yet whether the XXL winter coat really fits me. Baladeva isn't using the new blanket he received. A few of the gifts were right on. Manohara will use the cooking grill we gave him. Ravindra Svarupa likes the pizza oven he received. The children's gifts? Some of them were discarded, and some of them are already broken. The best gift is giving something Krsna conscious. Those who gave presents then had the benefit of a spiritual gift. Those who participated in kirtana were promoted to the spiritual platform. Those who increased their japa gained by numerical strength. (Haridasa Thakura

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chanted the first third of his quota silently; he chanted the second third at a whisper he could hear; he chanted the final third out loud.)

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I.

I dreamt a guy wrote a book. It was nasty but magical. He was giving them out free. It was sensational. He

was in New York City giving them out and he had helpers. I took one and began reading. It was bewildering.

Full of violence, but something made you read on. Then I saw it had no substance, no God-consciousness and I rejected it.

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I put it back on a stack of books marked "PAID." This somehow made me legally bound to buy the book for \$6.47 but I had no money. By the time the police came the author's helpers had slipped \$500 into my wallet. I returned it, and this meant I would have to walk all the way down to the Staten Island Ferry.

II.

At this point in the dream I identified with the author of the book. I was famous and me and my caretaker

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were surrounded with people, well-wishers.

I was limping with the pain in my left ankle and they noticed it and talked about it. I spoke to them about Krsna consciousness. I was trying to go home.

III.

Everyone had been mesmerized by the book and had a copy. But suddenly they began to see through and reject

it as I had. A news reporter said, “40% have rejected and 30% are still in favor.”

But I was still an object of public sympathy

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and people hung onto my words as I boarded the Staten Island Ferry.

I Want to Say

(In the mood of Satsvarupa dasa brahmachary)

Swamiji, you've made my life happy and give hope for the future life. You've given us the most relishable, all-attractive Personality of Godhead. I want to thank you by becoming your menial servant.

You talk with us as if it's normal for you,
but you are an intelligent, spiritual aristocrat
and we were ganja smokers, meat-eaters and other
things I needn't mention. You seem glad to see us,
especially when we meet in your room and we ask you
about the spiritual world
and we also talk about this world.
I want to tell you, you are cleaning my heart

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and my body and mind — I was so egocentric! (I still am,
but it was much worse.)
You're giving me God,
and there's no way I can repay such a gift.

I knew priests before but
they couldn't figure me out.
My father said I was “a Greek tragedy waiting to
happen.” You're the one in my life.
I want to say it and use my life as your servant
along with your other disciples.
I like to work for you at the welfare office.
Please give me more typing of Bhagavatam,
and I like to change the titles of your lecture
on the sign in the storefront window.
Please give me more things to do.
I'm young and can do things,
although I'm mostly incapable.
You could really use competent
well-to-do disciples, people with brains
for dealing with the world,

and people with pure hearts and humble natures, or
 good philosophers and organizers,
 at least simple, rugged souls
 ready to do whatever you ask,

ready to transform themselves
 into preachers because you have asked for it.

I'm none of these good things,
 but you don't hold it against me.

You act as if I am something good
 and you give me the name Satsvarupa das,
 "Truth Personified — the servant of."

Also I want to say I like the mantra describing you as
 "very dear to Krsna on this earth."

That's you. Because you have "taken shelter
 at the lotus feet of the transcendental Lord."

I love the way you translate.

I want to offer you my obeisances
 and do your work,
 my whole life.

Swamiji's Attractive Beauty

Sri Krsna is "handsomeness and waves of nectar of
 handsomeness." (Brhad-Bhagavatamrta). But Swamiji was
 seventy or eighty years old. We were all young men and
 women, so why were we attracted to this "old man"?
 (Swamiji used to say, "I'm an old man, I may die at any
 moment." And, "I am a poor foreigner. Why are they

after me?”) He had the attractive features of a sage. The way he sat, the shape of his head, the gestures of his hands. He was from the East, like Gautama Buddha. He sat on the floor or on the ground, and whatever furniture he had was at a low center of gravity, no chairs. The aura and look in his eyes was from another world. You can't describe it, his eyes signaled, “You can look in my eyes but you will not be able to understand my love of Krsna, but that's what's there.” He was childlike also, very sweet but very strong. You couldn't come before him like a rogue and a rascal and still approach him. You had to accept that he was an elderly person, a guru, and you must be respectful to him, and then things could happen. Then you could begin to perceive his actual beauty; he would relax and allow himself to be taken care of by you and exchange with you.

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We were certainly not turned off by the fact that he was an elderly person. We weren't looking for youth. We knew where our youthful smart-aleckness had gotten us—into trouble and suffering. There was no question of sexual attraction, or as men sometimes do, squaring off with aggressiveness: “Can you beat me up? Can I beat him up?” With the Swami, it was freedom from all that because he was the guru, he was old, and he knew so many things that you didn't know.

Swamiji kept spelling everything out: He was a representative of Krsna, and Krsna is there in His Name, Krsna is there in so many ways, and we can serve Krsna

and go to Krsna. Aside from Swamiji, nobody was going to tell you about Krsna—that Krsna is God and that Krsna is a cowherd boy. Krsna was so “far out” we couldn’t believe it, but every time we went in front of Swamiji, you had to believe it. He kept up the reality of Krsna. And in the books that he gave out—there was Krsna. He made such a powerful presentation that you said, “Let’s go up and hear the Swami talk about Krsna.” You would come to him with your concoctions, “What about this? And what about that?” But Swamiji would bring it right back to Krsna, and you would accept it. And so gradually in his presence, hearing about Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and devotional service to Krsna, you started becoming Krsna-ized and you realized that Swamiji had knowledge

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and influence to do this to people—to create faith in them, for Krsna. But you had to go back regularly to him and get it charged up.

He had unshakeable faith in Krsna, and he could see Krsna. We sometimes imagined how he could see Krsna. We couldn’t quite understand it. When did he talk with Him, in sleep? Swamiji would say, “Yes, you can talk with Krsna, but He only talks with intimate persons.” We may not have known exactly how, but we did know that we were attracted to him because he had such a conviction about Krsna. I remember once in that room he said, “People can talk philosophy about Krsna, but what is their realization?” Then I realized that’s what

he's got—full realization of Krsna. Exactly how he realized, we didn't know, but we had faith that he was experiencing a huge amount that we were not.

Those who were not his disciples thought he was pretty much like everybody else: an old man with Hindu knowledge, probably the same motives and drives as everyone else. But we disciples believed in him and sensed that his perception of everything was very different from ours. He was in touch with Krsna, and fascinating, attractive and lovable. We could sense his mystic potency. Even Allen Ginsberg saw it: "I would disagree with him and even suspect ego exchanges, but no matter how much I disagreed, I was always glad to be with him because of the aura of

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sweetness due to his complete dedication." Nicely put. Even he, although not a disciple, when coming into the Swami's presence, was able to see, "Here is a man who is totally dedicated and in love with Krsna." That made Swamiji beautiful; although he appeared to be an old man, he was beautiful because of his love for Krsna.

I received an email from Ishana in Moscow. She writes that she is "very glad that everything has been safely resolved between us." But from her latest email I find that there is still a big misunderstanding. She writes, "I really love the Father and Mother of our material world." She assembles quotes to support the necessity of worshiping Siva and Durga. I wrote her back that her

worship is done by the saktas, not the pure Vaisnavas who render devotional service unto Gaura-Nitai and Radha-Govinda. I told her I am reading Bhurijana's The Backward Glance: An Overview of the Eleventh and Twelfth Cantos of Srimad-Bhagavatam. In the Eleventh Canto, the Uddhava-gita occurs. Lord Krsna incessantly and repeatedly tells Uddhava that bhakti unto Krsna is the supreme goal. The Lord rejects jnana-yoga, dhyana-yoga, worship of demigods, mental speculation, etc. It is, as Krsna teaches in the Bhagavad-gita, "Just abandon all varieties of religion and surrender unto Me. I will protect you from all sinful reactions.

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Do not fear." (Bhagavad-gita 18.66) Bhurijana's book supports Krsna's insistence on bhakti unto Krsna with profuse quotes from the commentaries of the acaryas. How convincing and ecstatic is the Uddhava-gita!

Ishana writes, "Personally, I already want in this life-- HERE AND NOW--to receive the mercy of Lord Siva (in the form of the realization of impersonal Brahman), as well as the mercy of Laksmi-Narayana (with their riches)." I wrote back to her that pure Vaisnavas consider realization of impersonal Brahman as "hellish." They do not hanker or pray for material riches. All they want is love of Krsna following in the steps of the gopis of Vrndavana.

*** December 28, 2018

At seventy-nine years old, my main service is chanting japa, taking darsana of Radha-Govinda, associating with the devotees, taking part in group readings of Prabhupada's books, and writing the weekly Free Write Journal. The Journal is the hardest thing to do. I try to make it free, but I meet writing blocks. If I go too free, it becomes prajalpa and I have to discard it.

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King Prataparudra finally receives the full mercy. As advised by the devotees, he enters a garden in ordinary dress while Lord Caitanya is lying there unconscious, fatigued from dancing. Prataparudra massages the Lord's feet and legs. He recites verses from the "Gopigita" section of the Tenth Canto. Lord Caitanya cries out, "Go on reciting, go on reciting." Then the King reaches the verse which states that those who speak Krsna's teachings are the most munificent. At this point Caitanya Mahaprabhu sits up and embraces Prataparudra, crying out, "You are the most munificent! You are the most munificent!" The Lord asks, "Who are you?" and Prataparudra replies, "I am the servant of your servants." Caitanya Mahaprabhu reveals some of His divine qualities, and Prataparudra finally leaves the garden. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, being omniscient, knew that the reciter was actually the King, but He gave him His full mercy because He was satisfied by the King rendering menial service for Lord Jagannatha by

sweeping the road. Needless to say, King Prataparudra was fully satisfied being embraced by Lord Caitanya.

Sri Krsna Caitanya wants to go to Vrndavana, but His devotees bring Him impediments and keep Him in Nilacala. For another year the devotees

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from Navadvipa come and join Him and observe the Ratha-Yatra and other festivals. Then they tell Him it is too cold to travel. Thus they bind Caitanya Mahaprabhu with ties of love and keep Him in Jagannatha Puri because they cannot bear separation.

Manohara said usually when we think of devotional service, we think of the devotees wanting to please Krsna. But in this section of C.c., the devotees are placing their desire before Lord Caitanya, even if it opposes His desires. He wants to go to Vrndavana, but they want to keep Him in Jagannatha Puri.

*** December 30, 2018

I finish scanning through Bhurijana's overview of the Eleventh Canto. Marvelous, opening up pure love of Krsna. Now I am reading of the bad qualities of Kali-yuga. The only way to save oneself (and others) is to chant His Name. I say the mantras silently; I pay attention in the mind, pronouncing and counting. Like the first time at bat he hits a single. Good, but I need to do better if I want to score runs. No bodily ecstatic symptoms. His heart must be steel-framed. If tears don't

come to the eyes, if the voice doesn't choke up, if the hairs don't stand on end . . . If I don't feel the whole

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world is void in Krsna's absence . . . When can I raise the bar to that standard? But Srila Prabhupada writes that sometimes even a mahabhagavata doesn't show physical symptoms of ecstasy. No imitation like the sahajiyas. No "squeezing out a few tears" during prayer.

Maybe I can try Haridasa Thakura's division of chanting his 300,000 Names but do it with my sixteen rounds quota: the first four rounds silently, rounds 8-12 whispering so you can hear them, and rounds 12-16 out loud. Perhaps I can do it without provoking a headache.

Reading the Twelfth Canto overview. Kali-yuga is the worst age, full of vices, but it has one outstanding good advantage: simply by chanting the holy names one can become cleansed of all sinful reactions--and develop love of God. The snake-bird, Taksaka, came to kill Maharaja Pariksit with his poisonous fangs, but the King had already left his body and gone back to Godhead. At the end of the Eleventh Canto, Lord Krsna's departure is described. Sitting under a banyan tree, He arranges that a hunter named Jara comes there and mistaking Krsna's feet for the face of a deer, he shoots arrows at the lotus feet. Jara only grazes the Lord's feet, but he greatly laments what he has done. Krsna assures him that this

has actually been done by Him, and He sends a chariot to take Jara to the spiritual world. The

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Lord then closes His eyes. Bhurijana writes, “Therefore the withdrawal of the Yadu dynasty and Lord Krsna’s own disappearance from the earth were not material historical events; they were instead a display of the Lord’s internal potency for the purpose of winding up His manifested pastimes on earth.” The Lord returned to His own abode.

I keep dreaming of free writing. I want to do it, do it a lot. Two notebooks a month. But “writing practice,” as N.G. calls it, is not Krsna conscious. It’s not sravanam kirtanam; it’s “wild mind.” Just as I vowed not to listen to jazz anymore, I don’t think I can indulge in free writing. I steer to Krsna. But I can’t stop dreaming of my desire to do it.

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