

Free Write Journal #113

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NOTE: SDG Maharaja will make a special live appearance on ISKCON of New Jersey's Zoom channel this Saturday, October 17th at 11:30 A.M. EST (4:30 P.M. BST/ 5:30 P.M. CEST/ 6:30 P.M. MSK/ 8:30 P.M. ISK) to read original poems glorifying Srila Prabhupada. All are welcome to participate in this worldwide event.

The Zoom link: <https://tinyurl.com/ud7rxd4>

The Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/iskconofnj>

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Free Writes

Devotee Association

I have temporarily stopped listening to Vrndavana-*wallas* speaking esoteric Krsna pastimes from Vrndavana. It has been nectar, although sometimes they include *jana-pramana* (“the evidence from the people”). Now I’m listening to Jayadvaita Swami’s talks from Towaco, New Jersey on the Second Canto of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. It’s really nondifferent from *vrndavana-lila*. Maharaja’s classes are interactive, as he takes many questions and answers them to the devotees’ satisfaction.

I was speaking to a devotee who said he’s hankering to get the association of advanced devotees. I told him plenty of association is available on Zoom from superior devotees, and he just has to tune in and receive it. He seemed to have a romantic conception of sitting under a tree and hearing from advanced Vaisnavas. But he lives in a big American city, and so he should face the reality of his situation and tune in to the “silver lining” that COVID-19 has brought. Now many

very qualified devotees are speaking on Zoom, and they are available as never before.

I mainly think of advanced devotees as those who love to hear and glorify plain *parampara* talks about Krsna and His associates. They mostly refer to Prabhupada's books. This is the safe path to perfection. There's a poker card game called "21." The player tries to draw cards until he gets as close as possible to 21. Once you get 21, there's no point in trying to get "more" because you've already won. Prabhupada's books are "21" and include the essential reference to the comments by the *acaryas*.

Jayadvaita Maharaja, in his questions-and-answers forum, demonstrates the discretion of a mature devotee. When two ladies asked him for permission to watch entertainment movies on a rationed basis, Maharaja was uncompromising. He said the movies were a distraction from concentrated devotional service, and this includes politics and sports, music, etc.

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Maharaja spoke on an interesting verse from the Second Canto that said if you don't shed tears and your hairs stand on end, your heart is steel-framed. The chanting is dull and mechanical. But then the purport quoted Visvanatha Cakravarti saying the *prakrta sahajiyas* demonstrate all the physical symptoms of ecstasy while chanting, but they do it in imitation, and their behavior isn't good. Then he spoke on something called "steady *bhava*." The symptoms are not wanting to waste a minute in the Lord's service, attachment to the holy names, etc. I took solace in hearing these symptoms of steady *bhava* because it seemed they were something I could achieve, although spontaneous ecstasy was not in my grasp. And neither will I imitate the *sahajiyas* or associate with them.

Ending the *Uddhava-gita*

In our out-loud readings at mealtimes, we have finished the *Uddhava-gita*. We are sorry to

see it go, but in the text it is suggested that we read it again. It's amazing how much Krsna actually speaks in the *Uddhava-gita*. Uddhava questions the Lord, and Krsna gives direct answers in eloquent form. If you want to know what God says, read the *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Uddhava-gita*. The *Bhagavad-gita* is more preliminary—although emphasizing *bhakti*—and the *Uddhava-gita* is more advanced, being spoken to the highly-intellectual friend Uddhava. *Uddhava-gita* puts to rest any doubts that *bhakti* is the topmost process of yoga. All other processes are unimportant compared to *bhakti*.

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Composed five thousand years ago, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* accurately predicts the horrendous characteristics of Kali-yuga. We are now experiencing them. But for the period of over 400,00 years, they will get worse and worse. Sukadeva Gosvami describes the faults that are natural to people living in Kali-yuga:

“ . . . The women, becoming unchaste, will freely wander from one man to the next. Cities will be dominated by thieves, the Vedas will be contaminated by the speculative interpretations of atheists, political leaders will virtually consume the citizens, and the so-called priests and intellectuals will be devotees of their bellies and genitals. The *brahmacaris* will fail to exercise their vows and become generally unclean, the householders will fail to execute their vows, and the *vanaprasthas* will live in the villages, and the sannyasis will become greedy for wealth . . . Cows will be abandoned or killed when they stop giving milk. In Kali-yuga, men will be wretched and controlled by women. They will reject their fathers, brothers, and other relatives and friends, and will instead associate with the sisters and brothers of their wives. Thus their conception of friendship will be based exclusively on sexual ties . . . In

fact, the people of Kali-yuga will gradually come to appear like ghostly, haunted figures. In Kali-yuga men will develop hatred for each other over a few coins. Giving up all friendly relations, they will be ready to lose their own lives and kill their own relatives. Men will no longer protect their elderly parents, their children or their respectable wives. Thoroughly degraded, they will care only to satisfy their own bellies and genitals.” (S.B. 12.3.31-42)

In the 21st century this does not read like make-believe mythology; it is factual and can be read in the daily newspapers. This is the power of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, that it factually tells events 5,000 years before they happen. It lends credence to everything that’s in the *Bhagavatam*.

Sukadeva Gosvami Describes the Only Remedy for Kali-yuga's Virulence

In the *Bhakti-sandharba*, Srila Jiva Gosvami cites texts from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to illustrate how in Kali-yuga it will be possible to find devotion and surrender to the Lord through the power of *nama-kirtana*. Those who offend the holy name will become indifferent or averse to the Lord.

“O King, in the age of Kali, people’s intelligence will be diverted by atheism, and they will almost never offer sacrifice to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the supreme spiritual master of the universe. Although the great personalities who control the three worlds all bow down to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, the petty and miserable human beings of this age will not do so.” (S.B. 12.3.43)

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In our out-loud reading we heard that at the end of Pariksit’s life Sukadeva Gosvami spoke to

him about *jnana*. This was really for the benefit of the *jnanis* and impersonalists in the audience. Maharaja Pariksit became annoyed that the Lord was teaching him *jnana* at the very end, since he was a pure devotee of Krsna. Sukadeva was pleased by Maharaja Pariksit's passing his test. Then it was time for the snake bird to arrive and bite Maharaja Pariksit with his poison. Kasyapa Muni tried to intervene. Kasyapa Muni was capable of intervening. He knew the art of removing the poison. When Taksaka confronted him, he gave Kasyapa many gifts that he knew Kasyapa liked. Taksaka slowed down in order to give the gifts, and this gave time to Maharaja Pariksit to absorb his mind and surrender to fully to Krsna. He actually went back to the spiritual world before Taksaka could bite him on the foot. Maharaja Pariksit's body was then burned to ashes by the power of the poison, and everyone was astounded.

Next, Maharaja Pariksit's son Janamejaya became furious at the death of his father, and he prepared to hold a sacrifice to kill all the snakes in the world. He began killing them, and they were falling into the sacrificial fire. Taksaka saw what was happening and took shelter of Lord Indra. But then Indra's airplane was being drawn toward the fire. So Brhaspati, the guru of the demigods, told King Janamejaya to cease his intention of killing all the snakes in the world. Janamejaya submitted to Brhaspati and stopped the slaughter. Several minutes before the arrival of the snake, Sukadeva Gosvami left the place and continued his wandering throughout the world.

Paid *Bhagavatam* Reciters

In Jayadvaita Maharaja's *Bhagavatam* classes he spoke Prabhupada's instructions against the practice of professional *Bhagavatam* reciters who collected fees to maintain their families. This was not the standard of Sukadeva Gosvami or Suta and the sages at Naimisaranya. Maharaja then spoke about the practices current in ISKCON. He stated that in Prabhupada's time he didn't allow salaries to be paid to the BBT workers. The *grhasthas* could be given one of the ISKCON-owned apartments near the temple and go to the temple for Krsna *prasadam* meals. Prabhupada

made an exception with the book distributors. He allowed them to keep a percentage of their sales for their upkeep.

Then Maharaja spoke against the current practices in ISKCON regarding paying devotees to do their service. He said that it was widely practiced now that *pujaris* would be paid to do the worship of the Deity, cooks would be paid, and many other services would be covered by financial remuneration. He was aware that this is widely going on, but he strongly spoke against it on principle.

Darsana

Radha-Govinda get cleaned and Their dress changed today, every third day. I will be sorry to see Their splendorous red-and-cream outfits disappear, but we can be confident that Their new dress will be attractive. Bits of paint have come off Their lips and faces. Krsna dasi is preparing to freshly color Them. Because of my cataracts I cannot see Them with 20-20 vision, but we are planning to correct that. Now, by sitting at the edge of my chair, I can appreciate Their full beauty. Radha and Govinda are lovely, standing close together.

The ashram inmates are not the only ones who love the Deities. The Culligan man who comes monthly to change the water filter is a great appreciator of a large photo of Radha-Syamasundara of Vrndavana that hangs in our kitchen. He comes every month and never fails to stop and make verbal appreciation of the beauty of Radha-Syamasundara. He's a sixty-year-old man not acquainted with Krsna consciousness except for his monthly *darsana*. Every time he comes he also takes *prasadam*, either in the form of a dish or a bag of cookies for the road. He is very fortunate to receive *darsana* during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most temples are closed and people can't get access to *darsana*. He must have performed acts of *ajnata-sukrti* in his past life, and they are blossoming now in his devotion to Radha-Syama.

Lessons from *Sanatorium*

John read from the letters in the book, and he turned to the New Testament for three definitions of love: ‘*agape*,’ the love of sacrifice, *philo*, the love of friends, and *eros*, the emotional love which he presented as transcendental, not mundane sex. It was interesting that each of these Biblical terms for love fit exactly in the relationship with the characters in *Sanatorium*. He said the couple he is giving premarital counseling to very much appreciated the lessons from *Sanatorium*, and he is going to do it again with other couples.

Workers in the Storm

The landscape men worked one day and then took the day off because of predicted rainstorms (which actually took place). There were heavy gusts and plenty of rain and ice and hail. It would have ruined their work if they had come. The storm was so violent many trees came down, and our whole neighborhood and county was without internet. Half the neighborhood was also without electricity for twenty-four hours, and our own internet was down for that time. This meant our phone system was also down because it’s hooked to the internet.

Saci Suta came by and spoke about his reducing time using the internet. It had become a serious addiction problem. Now he’s down to two or three hours a day, but his wife is addicted to eight hours a day.

Yesterday was calm and sunny and the workers came back and finished the job. Now the front yard has a fresh new look, with a crisp straight divider between the grass and the gravel. It will be easier to plow snow and safely keep the cars and emergency vehicles off the road when there is snow. The fifty-year old concrete work leading to where Tulasi-devi is kept in the summer was repaired, and we have easy access to it. The work was done by Bhakta John Mulligan, Rama and another devotee, and it was paid for by a donation by an intimate friend. The front porch was

repaired and painted last summer, and now the yard is landscaped. Viraha Bhavan looks beautiful and is a form of preaching to the neighbors, who see that we Hare Krsnas take good care of our property, seeing it as the Lord's. (In a small town, that's big news.)

Haryasva

Haryasva came up to Stuyvesant Falls to associate with Ravindra Svarupa and myself. He has a long relationship with Ravindra Svarupa, who was his first temple president in Philadelphia, and he confides in him and gets valuable advice. He talked with me on the front porch wearing a mask. He said he wants to go inward in his Krsna consciousness and become closer to Krsna and guru. He's serious about *japa* and says he has reached a steady practice. I told him I wasn't a good conversationalist and I wanted him to talk and open his heart. So he did most of the talking. He's enthusiastic about spiritual life and likes to associate with devotees, especially those who inspire him. He loves to read my books, especially the ones on *japa* like *Japa Reform Notebook*, *Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name*, etc. He also reads the *japa* books of Sacinandana Swami and Bhurijana Prabhu. Every Saturday morning he goes on Zoom and conducts a *sanga*, where he talks mainly to younger devotees about *japa*. They discuss and chant a few rounds together.

I've had a relationship with Haryasva as guru and disciple for 40 years, and it's always been sweet and respectful. We used to hold disciples' meetings at Stuyvesant Falls twice a year, and Haryasva is enlivened to be with the family of my disciples. But now the COVID pandemic has stopped those meetings. I give a few Zoom talks, but I don't think Haryasva is able to watch them. Anyway, he likes to come up from Philadelphia and visit me in person, and I'm open to that. He is an exceptional case, and I want to give him access to me. Unfortunately it's getting cold, and this will probably be our last porch meeting until the spring.

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The Porch Is Closed

A disciple wrote me a letter of misery and woe. He's read in the *Journal* where I've had porch meetings with a number of devotees, and he wants to know if he can come too. But the weather has changed, and the porch meetings have to be closed. I could wear a big coat and a blanket, but I'm afraid of catching pneumonia. I can receive short phone calls. But they have to send me a letter first and tell me what they want to talk about. For COVID precaution reasons, I don't want anyone coming into the house.

The devotee who wrote me he's in misery and woe is not the only one. Every person in the material world is suffering birth, death, disease and old age. I try to rise above it by chanting and hearing in Krsna consciousness. This is the only way to escape the miseries and the cycle of birth and death. At least I feel relief by following Prabhupada's *vani*.

Are We Happy?

Haryasva asked Baladeva whether we inmates at Viraha Bhavan are happy. The answer is a definite yes. In Bhurijana's book *The Backward Glance* he mentions two kinds of happiness, the happiness of the transcendentalist and the happiness of the retarded fool. Our happiness is transcendental as we live in our ashram, the four of us cooperating and living in a spiritual way. Our house is not an ordinary place, but it's definitely an ashram. We have many beautiful Deities who are well cared for by our *pujaris* Krsna dasi and Bala. We live in a kind of safe bubble. We do our bit in preaching, with a weekly *Free Write Journal*, the publishing of numerous books, *prasadam* distribution to whoever we meet and engage with in the outside world. Guests occasionally come by and are impressed with the atmosphere. I'm happy with the peaceful Krsna conscious atmosphere. I'm free to write and read and attend our group out-loud readings from the scriptures at mealtimes. I am actually free to do all the things I like to do. I believe I'm acting to

serve Krsna, which is the essence of *bhakti-yoga*. Srila Prabhupada was sometimes asked, ‘What pleases you the most?’ Sometimes he replied, ‘If you become Krsna conscious,’ or he would say, ‘If you love Krsna.’ Prabhupada would also say, ‘Chant and be happy.’ We are trying to pursue these things at Viraha Bhavan.

1972 NOD Lectures

Pradyumna would read from the book, and when Prabhupada was inspired he would interrupt him and expound on the topic. He said that Krsna consciousness is a fact within everyone. (There was a certain *sannyasi* who circulated a paper that said that Krsna consciousness was not innate but was brought about by the association of devotees. Here Prabhupada seems to contradict this, although in other places he emphasizes association of devotees.) Krsna consciousness is dormant within everyone. Prabhupada quoted from the “*Siksastakam*”: *Ceto darpana marjanam bhava maha davagni nirvapanam*. By chanting Hare Krsna one cleanses the heart so that his pure devotion to Krsna is awakened. He demonstrated in his lecture by chanting the entire mantra: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. He said the more one chants, the more he is cleansed. There are three stages in chanting: the offensive stage, the clearing stage and the offenseless stage. In a lecture he said that in the offensive stage one still has to suffer. He said that in the almost-offenseless stage one clears off most of his bad habits and moves toward liberation. In the offenseless stage one enters *krsna-prema*. But even chanting in the offensive stage is beneficial, and gradually one makes progress. Again he emphasized that Krsna consciousness is already there in the heart. Otherwise, how could so many Europeans and Americans take up Krsna consciousness so quickly and seriously?

Prabhupada Meditations Volume 3

p. 94-96

“Praying to the Giver of the Holy Name

“I don’t know much, but I was with the Swami. He led the chanting, and we sang with him. He talked and we heard. We went home and thought over what he said. ‘The Swami is self-realized. In the First Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam it says you have to hear from a self-realized soul. Swamiji said he is going to teach us about Krsna.

“I remember the books in his room and the Swami in his room and his coming down to have *kirtana*.

“Years later Prabhupada said, ‘In the beginning I did not tell them that you have to follow any rules and regulations. I simply said, “Chant.”’ It is a fact. He simply said, ‘Chant Hare Krsna,’ and we chanted with him. That was a different time, when Swamiji was here on earth, and now he is not here. He is in samadhi, gone back to Godhead. He had left us behind to continue the Krsna consciousness movement. We follow his instructions.

“ . . . One may object, ‘There are so many things to do for Prabhupada. Why sit around and try to remember being with him?’ I agree, but can’t we spare some time to try to do this? Are we so effective now on Swamiji’s behalf? Are we doing such tremendous things? I mean do we have complete potency that we do not need to get in touch with him in a very personal and primitive way again? The fact is, we do need to get in touch with him. The essence of Krsna consciousness is not just propaganda and organization but attraction for the Lord, and especially the Lord’s holy name, which is the most merciful way in which he appears in the world. Yet, as merciful as the holy name is, it has to be given by a devotee. You have to receive the holy name from a pure devotee. Therefore I remember those mornings when Prabhupada came to give us the holy name.

“O holy name, You are so kind that You came with the Swami to the Lower East Side. You appeared there in the mouths of his boys and purified us. You purified Tompkins Square Park, and the whole atmosphere of New York City. You kindly appeared in our *kirtana* by the wish of Your pure devotee, who knew how to form Your sacred letters. Those ‘alphabets,’ as Prabhupada said, are nondifferent from Krsna; they are Krsna. You do not appear just by anyone’s combining of the alphabets. K-R-S-N-A. When Swamiji did it, You appeared in that storefront so that even crazy boys became enthusiastic to possess You.”

Prabhupada Meditations, Volume Four

p. 240

From “**Satsvarupa dasa Brahmachary Diary:**

“Swamiji, from you we hear
and see
the sages of the past.
Naked mendicants
who never pass semen
and by concentration of the soul
on its light
and its glare
they attain the sky of Brahman.
It’s not easy.
And we can’t do it now.
But even in Manhattan

we can transcend
just by vibrating the holy names.
Please lead us to do so.
I'm writing this 'poem,'
from the floor of my apartment,
two minutes' walk from you,
on a hot summer afternoon.
Looking forward to tonight
when we can see you
put on Vaisnava *tilaka* and
chant Hare Krsna under your gaze
then hear your lecture—
and transcend!
Now let me go out and work
at my welfare-office yoga
to gather my weekly check
of sacrifice for Visnu.
I'm confident because you are near
and ready to get free of *maya*
in her various forms.
Your servant,
Satsvarupa dasa”

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“Notes on *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, First Canto, Volume 2:

“Swamiji is selling the book (first volume published) but rich men aren’t coming forward. They think he’s a businessman. But you can do business for Krsna and it’s not sense gratification.

“So even though we are not in the Himalayas, even though we talk of business . . . Because we are 100% servants of the Lord and are engaged in the service of broadcasting the message of His glories—certainly we shall transcend and get through the invincible impasse of maya and reach the effulgent kingdom of God to render Him face to face eternal service, in full bliss and knowledge.’ (Preface, Volume 2)”

Vandanam: A Krsna Conscious Handbook on Prayer

“Difficulties in Prayer

“Distractions

“We have already mentioned Bhaktivinoda Thakura’s definition of distraction as a form of *pramada* caused by attraction to material desires. It is another action of the uncontrolled mind.

“We sit for *japa* (or prayer recitation or personal prayer), make a good start coming into the presence of Krsna and guru, when suddenly we find ourselves out in left field as if blown there by a gust of wind. Instead of thinking about Krsna we are chewing on our cud or in the midst of malicious thoughts. There is no remedy for this

except to become a pure devotee and perfect yogi whose every thought is connected favorably to Krsna, and who is never distracted.

“ . . . Until we reach that stage, our remedy is to endure and never give up. There is also a distinction between involuntary distraction and voluntary indulgence in distraction. If we find that we have gone off the track in prayer because of some external interruption or stray thoughts, we shouldn't remain there, but return to our Krsna conscious thought, that much is within our power.

“Even advanced souls will be subjected to distractions while in the material world, but the sage of steady mind goes on with his convictions. As described by Lord Krsna,

“A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires.’ (*Bg.* 2.70)

“Even if our *japa* is filled with distractions, Krsna is pleased with our repeated attempts to bring the mind back under the control of the holy name.”

Truthfulness, the Last Leg of Religion

p. 34

“Distributing the Truth

“Is there a conflict between admitting one's disqualifications while at the same time claiming to be a distributor of the Absolute Truth? One may think, ‘If I haven't attained it myself, how can I claim to give it to others?’

“In fact, humility and preaching go well together. Just as we must constantly struggle to undeceive ourselves, so we must regularly face our duty to distribute the Truth. Preaching is an excellent way to undeceive oneself provided it is done honestly.

“When I distribute knowledge of the Absolute Truth, I am not claiming that I am perfectly realized. I accept the process of *brahma-sabda*, or hearing from Vedic authorities, as the superior method for knowing that which is inconceivable: the Absolute Truth. I may admit that I have very little realization of this, but I have faith in the realizations of great *acaryas* in the past, and also in the realization of my own spiritual master. Therefore, I think that others should get the opportunity to begin their surrender unto the Absolute Truth. Even if those I approach cannot take to it in this lifetime, and even if I cannot fully do it, still it is worthwhile. As Srila Prabhupada wrote, ‘A grain of faith is worth more than tons of faithlessness.’”

Breaking the Silence: Selected Writings 1991-1997

p. 75

“There, I've done it, some Krsna conscious writing. Our foundation is always Krsna conscious acts, and they begin with *sravanam kirtanam*. When our lives are thoroughly Krsna conscious, we won't have to run to the book like a plane out of fuel. We'll read, but spontaneously. We'll live and breathe in story and reading, in *Bhagavatam* and song, and it will all be interrelated and harmonious.

“And we won't feel guilty that we're writing or striving for art. We'll let ourselves spend time on it, knowing that the art needs it. ‘Art’ isn't a dirty word. Giotto's angels and his St. Francis frescoes are devotion. We need Krsna conscious art. Call it preaching—a more recognizable and accepted term. To be proficient,

daring, alive at this form of preaching, we need to give it time. It's a project we pour ourselves into. It's no different than a seamstress staying up all night to sew a dress for the Deity or a traveling *sankirtana* party selling books night after night. People may criticize them—maybe their technique is too rough—but Prabhupada wanted the books distributed, and they know that.

“I’ve brought up these examples to establish a context for ISKCON readers (condescendingly?) and for myself—to know I’m on safe ground.

“Now to go forward with my metaphor, ‘song.’

“These free-versers are song, these memories, containers, and words that break out.”

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“But in Krsna consciousness, may we
do that? Don't ask me.

“But can we ask sages and *sastra*?

No time for it.

“But I say live KC always

and then when you sing,

it will be no harm

if you don't run to the book

to consult, ‘Has any devotee

sung like this yet?’

Deities in Navadvipa,

kirtanas in Navadvipa,
 temples and devotees,
 the learned tell us stories when
 we are on *parikrama*.
 The Lord advented here.

“And I sat there, bitten by a mosquito
 on my red-marked ankle and
 I sat there and this song is
 boiling and welling in me,
 this very song.”

The Wild Garden: Collected Writings, 1990-1993

p. 334

“WRITING

“The pattern so often when I write is that I start with whatever my senses can perceive or whatever is on my mind and feel confident that it is the reality. Soon my conscience tells me that I want to glorify Krsna, that this is the whole purpose of writing. But I cannot turn to a description of Krsna in the spiritual world with the same directness as my more perceptual writing. Of course this is one advantage to writing in Vrndavana, that even the sense perceptions are of the holy *dhama*.

“I have to leap from what seems real and tangible to a world I know only from books. I’m sorry about this because, frankly, I write as a propagandist, as someone who wants to convince people of Krsna, as someone who wants to encourage

devotees about the reality and beauty of Krsna. But I cannot speak of Krsna as if I have just seen Him going to play in the fields. I could—rather, I *wish* I could. I wish I could be filled with emotions of separation from Krsna, or with the joy in telling of His activities the way the Vrajavasis do at the end of the day. How can I even think of such a thing? And how dare I write like that? It’s not even expected of me. Anyway, I’m just explaining the pattern, and now I have to work within my limitations as a devotee and a writer. Therefore I hope I can make that leap smoother. I would like to find a way to repeat what’s in Prabhupada’s books and yet have it come directly through my own senses and mind. Then I will be a devotee of Krsna who is also an honest, complete human being. I want to tell the happiness of Krsna consciousness and yet be humble. These are things I can perfect as the art of expression.”

Prabhupada Meditations, Volume 4

p. 329

“Dealing with Our Illusory Prabhupada

“The first time I heard the phrase ‘illusory Prabhupada,’ it was spoken to me by my Godbrother Bhurijana Prabhu. I was startled to hear that phrase. Bhurijana said that he had been serving Srila Prabhupada in Hong Kong while Prabhupada was in America. Bhurijana thought that he had subtly begun to do things differently from the way Prabhupada did them. To rationalize his behavior, Bhurijana tried to justify his actions based on what he thought Prabhupada would say. In this way he felt like he was still in line with Prabhupada. He never actually forgot Prabhupada and had no other desire than to serve him, and so he began to serve Prabhupada as he

conceived of him in his own mind.

“Then Prabhupada came to Hong Kong. When Bhurijana came to meet him at the airport, it was a shocking experience. Seeing the real Prabhupada, to have to answer to him and surrender to his instructions, was a crushing blow.

“To describe one’s creation of an ‘illusory’ Prabhupada is a very honest statement for a disciple—to admit that a duality can exist between Prabhupada as he is and Prabhupada as we want him to be.

“We all want to strive to replace any imagined idea of Prabhupada with the real person. One way to do this is to expose ourselves to Prabhupada’s books, lectures and letters. Of course, the letters are sometimes jarring unless they are read carefully according to person, time and place. For example, Prabhupada might strongly reprimand someone and tell him not to write poetry. A poet may be hurt by Prabhupada’s condemnation of something he holds dear. But one has to consider whether the person Prabhupada wrote the letter to was misbehaving in other ways—was writing poetry as an excuse for not doing other service? Was his or her poetry expressing materialistic sentiments? There are so many things to consider. Therefore it is good for us to expose ourselves to the ‘real’ Prabhupada as he wrote many letters to different people. Thus we have to carefully understand the context from which he is speaking.

“There are many ‘Prabhupadas’ floating around our movement. (How often do we hear, ‘Prabhupada said,’ offered by someone trying to end an argument?) Our search for the real Prabhupada will have to be a sensitive and ongoing one. We have to be patient with ourselves as we serve Prabhupada. Even if there is some trace of illusion in ourselves, ultimately there is nothing illusory about Prabhupada. It is natural to select certain instructions that we think fit our situations and

personalities. When we try to relate to the spiritual master as preachers, we even encourage newcomers to find something in Prabhupada’s teachings that they can follow wholeheartedly. We just have to be careful not to present a watered-down version of what Prabhupada is teaching. Until we are pure, there will always be some trace of compromise in our ability to follow, but we should always seek to increase our surrender and to know internally who our spiritual master is and what he wants from us.

“Neither should we be afraid of the possibility that we have created an ‘illusory Prabhupada.’ It’s not like the ‘illusory Vasudeva’ that the demon Salva created to dishearten Krsna on the battlefield. Salva said, ‘Krsna, I have Your father here, and I am going to cut off his head. There is nothing You could do about it.’ Salva then cut off the head of the mystic illusion. When Krsna saw it, He appeared to be unhappy for a moment. But since Krsna is never overcome by illusion, He then grew more determined to fight.

“Any service to Prabhupada is valid. If we are determined, we will gradually work out of our misconceptions of Prabhupada. And we are never cut off from the mercy.

“The Prabhupada we worship and who appears to us is our inspiration for devotional service. Salva used the ‘illusory Vasudeva’ in an attempt to harm Krsna. But if we worship Prabhupada we will always be benefited with confidence in Prabhupada’s mercy. We can strive to cut away too much compromise in our service and to respond to Prabhupada as he is.”

“Remembering Srila Prabhupada at Bhaktivedanta Manor

“When I entered the temple room before *mangala-arati*, Prabhupada’s *murti* was covered with a curtain. They dress him every day here. A few minutes before the *mangala arati*, the curtain before the *vyasasana* is removed and everyone bows down. Prabhupada looked bright under the light. He wore a reddish cable sweater and a cap, suitable for the winter day. He looked regal in the setting of the Manor.

“There’s also a larger-than-life painting of Prabhupada in the temple room. Prabhupada stands by a lake with swans. One can meditate on this painting while chanting *japa*. I remembered this painting even as I waited at the airport for a plane.

“The Bhaktivedanta Manor is a busy temple, just as it was when Prabhupada was present. I was swept up into the action and met with many people during the day. In the afternoon, I went for a quiet hour in Prabhupada’s room. I saw him sitting where he used to sit, with his back to the window that faces the backyard and the lake. I sat before him again and tried quieting myself. I wrote a letter to Prabhupada and felt his presence.

“In the evening, Prabhupada’s room was filled up with about a hundred devotees. I told memories of people who visited Prabhupada at Bhaktivedanta Manor in 1973.

“He liked to stay here. In the photos of Prabhupada at the Manor, he seems very peaceful. He was happy to see the Britishers looking like Vaikuntha angels, dancing in the temple before Radha and Krsna. It gave him a special satisfaction because Britain had so long been a predominator and spoiler of Vedic culture in India. Prabhupada reversed this in a nice way and gave Krsna consciousness to England.

“One of the devotees asked me, ‘Can you tell us what were your favorite

memories of Prabhupada?’ I spoke about 1966. I admitted, however, that there are many different times and that anyone can have his favorite Prabhupada moods, such as Prabhupada in Vrndavana or New York City or at Bhaktivedanta Manor.

Anyone can have an intimate relationship with Prabhupada through his books and by serving him. It is not a fact that those who were with him in 1966 have more intimacy. The most empowered devotees of Prabhupada may have not appeared yet. For example, Krsnadasa Kaviraja, the greatest biographer of Lord Caitanya, appeared 40 years after Lord Caitanya’s disappearance. Devotees who were with Prabhupada personally can serve devotees in the present and the future by preserving the memories. Let us pass them on so that when the empowered devotees come, our memories will help them gain access to Srila Prabhupada.”

Srila Prabhupada Samadhi Diary

p. 21

“Srila Prabhupada Samadhi Mandir

10 A.M.

“Dear Srila Prabhupada,

“You told me to encourage the devotees more and more. I tell them to be determined and patient and not expect to become 100% pure and surrendered overnight. I give myself that advice too. But you are expecting more from your older students. We can’t only say that it takes time, that surrender is gradual. When one devotee said he could not do as much as you because you were a *paramahansa*, Prabhupada, you replied, ‘You also become *paramahansa*! Work hard, surrender.’

“I’m sitting before you, writing. If we leave Vrndavana early this year it will be to

go and preach on your behalf in the temples.

“People are coming into the *mandir* and making *pranamas* before your form. You sit and receive them as you used to, in your room. Are you telling them about Krsna? You said that even if people don’t learn philosophy from a *sadhu* but just render him service, as the child Narada did to the *bhaktivedantas*, then they still make great benefit. You hinted that we should come up to the standard of *bhaktivedantas*, and when the people come and see you with respect, get your mercy.

“In your golden *murti*, you have been doing *japa mala* in a bead bag. Today group after group comes in, mostly simple villagers from Vrndavana and Rajasthan. Sometimes someone asks me something in Hindi but I can’t reply. I just smile and nod. ‘Hindi is not required’ you said. But someone like me, I have to preach fully in American English.

“I wish I could write a nice poem, and I tried reading your purports earlier, but it was hot in the room and I was too drowsy. I’ll try again. I’m determined to gain the greed to go further and further into your books. But bit by bit I can attain it by your grace.

“When will such mercy fall to this one, who is weak and without intelligence. Allow me to be with you!”

My Search Through Books

“Paradise Lost

“John Milton was a religious thinker, and his purpose in writing *Paradise Lost* was to ‘justify the ways of God to man.’ But somehow, his humanlike portrait of

Satan came off more successfully than God, Adam or the angels and saintly persons. I also remember some of the students in our class protesting. When Adam said that he wanted to have children in order to help in gardening work in paradise, the students thought this showed an exploitative motive of Adam as father. But Professor Wolfe was always sympathetic to Milton, and he tried his best to explain to us why Adam's desire for 'extra hands' in the garden was not exploitative."

The Qualities of Sri Krsna

“39. Well-Wisher of His Devotees

“Krsna is *bhakta-vatsala*—He is especially inclined to His devotees. Among all His glories, this is the best. Neither does His love compromise. His impartiality toward the *jivas* is His way of reciprocating equally—to give Himself to those who want only Him.

“In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Rupa Gosvami gives an example of Krsna's favoritism on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra. Lord Krsna promised that He would not fight or show favor to one or the other side, but Bhishma forced Lord Krsna to save Arjuna. Bhishma fought so hard that Arjuna was on the verge of being killed at his hands. Bhishma did this because he was confident. He wanted to see Krsna favor his devotee. Thus he forced Krsna to break His promise and to rush forward with a wheel to kill him.

“Bhishma tried to defeat Arjuna so that he could exchange with Krsna in a chivalrous mood. Srila Prabhupada writes, “The dealings of Lord Krsna and Bhismadeva on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra are interesting because the activities of Lord Sri Krsna appear to be partial to Arjuna and at enmity with Bhismadeva, but

factually this was all especially meant to show special favor to Bhismadeva, the great devotee of the Lord. The astounding feature of such dealings is that a devotee can please the Lord by playing the part of an enemy.’ (*S.B.* 1.9.38, purport)

“Further evidence of Krsna’s favoritism toward Bhismadeva is that the Lord personally appeared at Bhismadeva’s deathbed just to assure the great warrior that he would be able to see Him at the last moment of his life. Bhismadeva says, ‘Yet despite His being equally inclined toward everyone, He has graciously come before me while I am ending my life, for I am His unflinching servitor.’ (*Bhag.* 1.19.22)”

Prose-Poems at Castlegregory, Ireland

“I saw my face in the mirror this morning—pampered, sheltered, a timid, thin face. I expect nothing to go wrong. I am like a respectable tourist in a hotel who wants his amenities and no surprises—no breakdowns, no terrorism, not even being made to wait in line. He doesn’t mix with the locals and likes his meals on time, and like any conservative, elderly gentleman, he expects quiet. He is quiet himself. He doesn’t play loud music and hopes not to hear any, no flirting, no drunkenness coming through the walls late at night. No smoking. He pays cash in local currency, backed by the U.S. dollar. He always knows where his passport is. Yet he’s a Hare Krsna trying to chant.”

Writing Sessions

My Purpose at Isola di Albarella (continued)

“October 22, 1996

“2 A.M.

“For a long time, I couldn’t get to sleep. I had a low-intensity diffuse headache. And more than that, I felt wide awake and a Bach tune kept going through my head. I felt that I was addicted to hearing the music, and that it wasn’t directly Krsna consciousness. In other words, what I had written earlier in the diary I was now feeling throughout my body and mind – that addiction to the allopathic medication was one kind of addiction and addiction to hearing music was another. And that I might try to give them both up in order to become a better Krsna conscious person. In that insomniac state I resolved to get together all of my recently acquired tapes of Bach’s music, Beethoven’s music, etc., and if not, throw them away then—at least put them far away from me and stop listening. I also considered doing the same thing with nondevotee poetry books. In order to do these things, I would have to ‘mortify’ myself. I thought of trying to read some statement about this in Therese (of Lisieux).

“I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that I felt myself in the grips of an unwanted craving. It kept me wide awake but I was also grateful to recognize it. And the decision I made to renounce it was not a merely intellectual one. It came from a more total unrest and dissatisfaction. I saw myself to have deviated from a simpler Krsna consciousness which is satisfied only with Prabhupada’s books and the music of *kirtana*. I know that I won’t be able to be completely satisfied right away with strict Krsna consciousness but I’m going to go for it. I want to be pleasing to Srila Prabhupada because that will awaken my own attraction to him.

“And so, I’m going to stop writing along to the music as I’ve been doing in this book and in the previous book, *My Purpose While Traveling*. Surely, I’ll be able to write without that stimulant.

“9:20 A.M.

“Desire to be serious in KC. But what can you actually achieve? Lacking the higher taste, how concentrated can you be, say, to read *only* SP’s books or chanting extra rounds?

“For example, you’re not going to go to GBC Godbrothers and ask for an assignment, stating your inability to know what’s best for you. You’re not going to settle in one place and preach there as a *prabhu-datta-desa*. Your health doesn’t allow you to visit many more places and give more lectures. You can still only go to places that are sympathetic to your condition of headaches and the likelihood of cancelling scheduled programs.

“Limited.

“Do you want to go on an art retreat? Not stay those two-three weeks in Ireland before going to India? Not stay three weeks right here in Albarella?

“And writing, reading? Could you do something much better and more suitable for a *sannyasi*?

“Noon

“Pausing in my writing life. You say I could give up this medication so maybe I could give up free-writing. Maybe it’s not the best thing. Why say something like that? Why not continue to do it? Is there another way for me to write? Then, what comes to mind?

“Just now I see Murray Mednick. He’s got eyeglasses on and so do I. It’s just a fantasy. What would he say? Maybe, ‘Hello’ and put down this KC content. Remember he said you wrap it up in the canon, you are not fearless like Rumi. Those guys say that a real creator free-spirit can’t be bound by canonical dogma. He finds God in his own way. Well, let them say that. Rupa Goswami follows the *parampara* and so do I. The best artists are not necessarily those who don’t know the science of God and make up their own. Wings, wings. I have little wings.

“I don’t have a soaring spirit. I don’t want to ruin myself flying too near the sun. I want to give people the best thing coming down. Hare Krsna. But you need to shape things. You want to be an ISKCON preacher. You write too much. Give it up.

“What else instead?

“We are here in this place, I keep forgetting how to spell it – Albarella. It is Italian. A quiet place. They have guards and it’s very strict. But the people who own the house next door just came and they were measuring their cement walk with a tape measure. I hope they don’t come back and make noise. I am sorry, folks, I don’t have the epidermis or I.Q. to make a big fuss. Just telling you this day, second one without constant pain. Krsna is giving me an easy time. But at night maybe I can’t sleep so well.

“I wish to be the poet of pure taste. Of the Goswami’s. A tiny reciprocator and follower of my Guru Maharaja. But I don’t want to offend other Vaishnavas or any living entity. Therefore, this is the way to do it, to toot the horn of remorse over your offenses.

“Before anyone passes away ask forgiveness and before I pass away get it straight. Don’t want to have songs on the brain that will bring me to Bach-loka rather than Krsnaloka. Put on a simple *bhajana* of Hare Krsna tunes and that will be

better. May the Lord protect you. May you be blessed, head and foot, and not with mouth disease. Keep clear of drunkards and women with bad intentions. If they spear you, don't cry out, or cry out hoping to remember the names of Krsna.

“The poem is hard gained, the head is okay so far, it is Ekadasi and so, you could chant.

“They said you had a dream that your Srila Prabhupada told you to read only his books. Deny it? Well, I don't recall a dream per se but I did get a pull from his direction to come back to his lotus feet and I wrote about this in *Prabhupada Samadhi Diary* just published as the last section of *Churning the Milk Ocean*.

“Oh, you are a proud creature. You should just serve your master and actually get into his books more and more and like to lecture. I am doing it. I hope to get better at it. Do something he will be pleased with. Hare Krsna.

“4 P.M.

“Madhu's coming to read to me from Cc. Some fog in my head. Don't imagine you're all ready to travel to lots of temples. I did think maybe I could sneak in a visit to Matsya Avatara's. But looked at the map – Pisa is far out of our way. We're planning to stay here until Govardhana Puja day then on the same day travel west and south of Italy to Avignon, France, in two days. There's a devotee there, Padasevana, who'll give us more attention than the doctor in Italy.

“The theme for this 'book' is recovery.

“Some letters will come and I'll answer them.

“Not writing much each day, partly due to headaches and also a lack of drive. Also, a deliberate pausing rather than headlong plowing into free-writing.

“My purpose in Albarella is already achieved – to stop the pills. But I’m still weak. Not that you kick the pills and two days later you certify yourself strong enough to travel and preach.

“But then what’s the purpose? Day by day see what other bad habits you might quit. Be patient. Today I will quit listening to the most excellent music in the world – a renunciation of that which isn’t favorable to Krsna consciousness.

“See, this is all naked, diary stuff.

“I don’t have a long-term theme as in *Pada-yatra*. The theme is health recovery but that also is material, body care.

“5:45 P.M.

“Night Notes

“Last night I told you I couldn’t sleep. This night may be better. I don’t think I’ll have that Bach *sinfonia* or ‘air’ in my head or craving, sensing it’s gripping my body and brain. No, because I have given it up. I should just sail off to sleep soon. I have not been noting any details of dreams. There’s a reason for that. I don’t think they are so important? I don’t believe fully in the theory that there is a benevolent wise dream producer in us who is sending us these messages to help us. They just come and I don’t know. The *sastra* is so clear and objective whereas the dreams are very, very subjective. But I do realize their value. They’re trying to express and say something. In other words, I’d like to record them but it disturbs sleep. And it’s not as important as *sastra*.

“I took solace in reading from my 1993 ‘Prabhupada Samadhi journal.’ I would go to his *mandira* and then to his room to write true notes. Very nice. Others can read it and get in touch with him. Maybe it should have been a book by itself. But I hope people will read it anyway, found in the last part of that big book, *Churning the Milk Ocean*.

“Now it is night. The shower head is broken from it being used incorrectly. I used it gently and didn’t break it. I will have to use this body and not always so gently. Besmirch. There are some embarrassing confessions in *Padya-yatra*. That’s the way I wrote it. No one confesses that stuff who is now a respectable religionist. He doesn’t want his followers to see that. But I did it.

“Are you bragging here? Maybe. I am trying to get underway. Trying to return to faith in the process. I asked Madhu to bring me the Sixth Canto of *SB* from the van. I’ll start it again while also reading *Cc.*, mostly hearing it as M. reads it aloud. Today he read the scene where Mother Saci sees her son again with His hair. She asked Him to arrange to live at Jagannatha Puri. He did so, so that His mother and devotees could be with Him sometimes. “I shall never be indifferent to you,” He told them. Yet He had to live aloof as a *sannyasi*. He preached but also spent a lot of time alone.

“Dreams will come and maybe I can catch a little of them. Would you like that? Don’t bore people.

“It is a definitely a blessing that I have now escaped the grip of the allopathic medicine fairly easily. Now I said that I am back at square one. But it certainly feels like a relief to be free. It was an illusion that I could control headaches and give

lectures whenever I wanted. I am resting here with no pressure. The test will be after we leave here. Until then I may not be able to say. But you might as well use this time for a writing and reading retreat. It's likely that I will get headaches and that I am not a strong and sturdy wanderer.

“But you are a reader and writer. Only a few may appreciate that. They would prefer to see you in the flesh rather than read your books. Okay, I'll do that too.

“But I need the time, the precious time. The up time. I want to show Krsna that I am using my time well. The books have a KC conclusion. The searching fellow should find a home, should ascend to the spiritual world. At least read and tell what you read. The Sixth Canto. I heard Srila Prabhupada giving by public lectures in Nellore in 1975. He read quite a bit from his *SB*. He read verse after verse and the purports from the opening chapter of the Sixth Canto, up to *kecit kevalaya bhaktya*. I was pleased and interested to hear it. Pray, please Lord, please master, let me come to your lotus feet in earnest. I pray for the quality.

“You can't accept the institutionalized version of Srila Prabhupada. You have to find him yourself. I've always said that, now I have to follow it.

“The diary said he's my lord, I come to him and touch his feet. I had to leave NM to do it. My dear Lord, You are the life and shelter even of the lotus flower. That's Krsna. Good night. Be kind to me and I'll be kind to you, leave with these messages. We are guarded by private security forces in this reserved part of Albarella. I hope nobody here makes noise. Now the next big step is to get the guts to get up at midnight because if you want quality reading and writing that's where it will happen. But you need to chance it that you can do it for an hour and then turn to *japa* and then keep going and still be okay and not get sick. I'll have to try it soon with the alarm clock set. Maybe even tonight. It would be nice...Hare Krsna Hare

Krsna, chanting while sitting in the white plastic chair, comfy looking at your master in *murti* on the table.”