

## *Free Write Journal #115*

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### **Free Writes**

#### **Deity Worship at Viraha Bhavan**

The worship of Deities at Viraha Bhavan is deep and engaging. Bala and Krsna dasi have their home Deities on our downstairs altar. They have been worshipping Them in Trinidad for 30 years. Now on our altar we have their Jagannatha Deities, their Gaura-Nitai Deities, their small Radha-Gopinatha, and I gave her Laddu Gopala (to worship with daily *laddus*). On our downstairs altar we also have—looming over the other *arca-vigrahas*—two 36-inch high neem *murtis* of Gaura-Nitai carved at Ekacakra, India. I also have my small Jagannatha Deities, whom I have worshiped and traveled with for 40 years. We also have a *tulasi* garden downstairs headed by a main plant over three feet tall. Besides that sacred plant are six other *tulasis* in clay pots that have come from the huge one. Generally we produce 20 or 30 small ones, which are given away to people who want them and can care for them. The altar downstairs converts the room from a house to a temple.

Upstairs in my room—just a few feet from my comfortable chair—is a 12-inch Prabhupada *murti* whom I commissioned from Locana dasa at the end of 1977. So he has been with me for over 40 years, traveling to different places but now installed permanently at Viraha Bhavan. Upstairs on a gray marble altar I have Radha-Govinda Deities. These opulent *murtis* have over 100 sets of outfits, mostly made by the master *mukut-walla* of Vrndavana, Tapan. Their *pujari*, Krsna dasi, cleans and changes Their clothes every three days. She photographs Them and posts the photos on Facebook. They have many fans who post their appreciation comments to Krsna dasi on a regular

basis. Below Radha-Govinda on the gray altar is a Deity of Lord Caitanya obtained a few years ago at Krsna-Balarama Mandir. He is Navadvipa-Caitanya, dancing with His arms upraised, black hair and a crown. He is very nicely carved. I also have a picture of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, from a painting commissioned by Maharaja Prataparudra in Caitanya's time. On an upper altar I have the Deity of Laksmi-Nrsimha, which was given to me by a Godbrother 40 years ago. We offer these Deities three full meals a day of Krsna *prasadam* in silver plates, bowls and cups. In our recent out-loud readings we have been hearing from *The Nectar of Devotion* and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, how much emphasis is placed on the worship of the *arca-vigraha* for *sadhakas*. My main participation is to receive *darsana* of the upstairs Deities as I sit peacefully in my chair and adore Them all.

### **Ekadasi**

Yesterday was auspicious Ekadasi. I had two appointments, but they had to be canceled. John Endler called on Zoom, but his Internet failed. The chiropractor, Mike, phoned and said he was feeling ill and had to cancel his treatment. I used the canceled time by chanting extra rounds in the afternoon.

By email I received the manuscript to *Karttika Moon*, a book on Karttika themes that I wrote years ago. It's scheduled to be published by the summer of 2021 in time for devotees to order it and read it months before Karttika begins, or when Karttika actually begins, reading it as part of their Karttika *vrata*.

### **Poetry Reading**

John Endler is communicating with Raghunath and trying to get him to put me on his daily *sanga* podcast on the Internet. Raghunath is very influential and has a large audience of devotees, yogis and seekers. If they'll permit me to read, I intend to do stream-of-consciousness poems from

my book *Kaleidoscope*. This will be daring, but I want to do it and hope the hearers will be receptive to the “wild” expressions of the poems. If I can capture their attention, it will be a great triumph.

John read to me a statement I made that I was trying to be the person I actually was rather than be the official version the institution wants me to be.

### **Prabhupada's NOD Lecture**

Prabhupada let his disciple read from the book at length without making comments. The section was on *varnasrama-dharma*. Even in ISKCON, Prabhupada said, the devotees should work cooperatively according to their tendency and quality. *Varnasrama-dharma* is not being followed in the world at large, and the result is chaos. But in the talks between Ramananda Raya and Lord Caitanya, Ramananda put forth *varnasrama-dharma* as the highest truth, and Caitanya Mahaprabhu rejected it as “external” and asked Ramananda to speak of something higher. Ramananda proceeded to talk of different spiritual processes, but Caitanya Mahaprabhu kept rejecting them until Ramananda quoted a verse from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* about pure hearing of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Lord Caitanya accepted that, yet asked Ramananda to go still higher.

### **Direct and Indirect**

In Jayadvaita Maharaja’s lecture on the *Bhagavatam*, he spoke of indirect and direct processes of going back to Godhead. Some yogi-devotees want to go sightseeing first and enter the heavenly planets before finally going on to Krsnaloka. The pure devotees have no interest in intermediate stops but go directly to the spiritual world.

“There is danger in going to the heavenly planets. One may get sidetracked by the beautiful women and gardens and opulent pleasures of the higher material planets. This is a backward process. The demigods in the higher planets want to take birth on the earthly planet. So what is the

use of taking an indirect path for sightseeing? Krsna says in *Bhagavad-gita*, “For one who knows of My birth and activities, he does not take another material body but goes directly to My spiritual abode.” You can’t use Gopa Kumara of the *Brhad-bhagavatamrta* as an example. He *did* visit all the higher planets, but he was never satisfied there, even in Vaikuntha. He chanted his Gopala mantra, which brought him to pure Krsna consciousness. He was dissatisfied in all the upper planets that he was sent to. With determination, he went on chanting the Gopala mantra and ultimately returned to Goloka Vrndavana, where Krsna lovingly embraced him as His lost servant.

### **Out-loud Reading**

In our out-loud reading at mealtimes we are hearing from *The Nectar of Devotion*. We are nearing the end, and devotees are thinking of what they want to vote for for the next book we’ll read. But we’re reluctant to leave NOD because it’s so sweet and ecstatic. One after another in rapid fire, we hear examples of ecstatic symptoms. Devotees have in their relationship with Krsna. Just now we’re reading of the cowherd boys who played with Krsna. Krsna plays His flute early in the morning, and all His cowherd friends join Him in going to the pasturing grounds. As this age Krsna once dressed Himself up as Radharani just to create fun among His friends. He put on golden earrings, and because He was blackish He smeared the pulp of sandalwood all over His body in order to become as fair as She. By seeing this dress, Krsna’s friend Subala became astonished.

All the friends were very daring, and they would risk any difficulty because they were confident that Krsna would help them to be victorious in all adventures. Another important pastime of the friends of Krsna is that they served as messengers to and from the *gopis*; they introduced the *gopis* to Krsna and canvassed for Krsna. When Krsna and Sridama were embracing one another, Srimati Radharani became a little envious, and hiding Her hot temperament, She said, “My dear Subala, you are very fortunate because even in the presence of superiors, you and

Krsna have no hesitation in putting your arms around each other!” An example of *sthayi* was exhibited when Arjuna (of Vrndavana) told Akrura, “My dear son of Gandhini, please ask Krsna when I shall be able to embrace Him in my arms.” When there is full knowledge of Krsna’s superiority, and yet in dealings with Him on friendly terms respectfulness is completely absent, that stage is called affection. There is one brilliant example of this affection: When the demigods, headed by Lord Siva, were offering respectful prayers to Krsna, describing the various opulences of the Lord, Arjuna (of Vrndavana) stood before Him with his hand on His shoulders and brushed the dust from His peacock feather. “Patri once addressed Krsna like this: ‘Why should you not protect me from the pangs of separation? My dear enemy of Kamsa, since You have left us, the heat of separation has become extraordinary. The heat is felt more severely when we understand that in Bhandiravana You are being refreshed by the cooling waves of the river known as Bhanutanaya (Radharani).’ The purport is that when Krsna was engaged with Radharani, the cowherd boys were feeling great separation, and that was unbearable for them.”

## LIST

1) Let us all remember the wonderful lifelong service Yasomati-nandana Prabhu has rendered to Srila Prabhupada. My humble and respectful obeisances to the departed soul of Yasomati-nandana Prabhu.

2) Jayadvaita Swami mentioned in his lecture that man is trying to reach other planets and reside there. But what will they do there? They will make a mess of the other planets as they have done on the earth planet. They will eat, sleep, have sex and defend—a life on the level of animals.

3) It was a quiet day at Viraha Bhavan. The exciting event was the unanimous secret vote by the Board to read *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* as our next book in the out-loud reading. It was a quiet, uncontested decision, not like the chaotic, threatening U.S. presidential election.

4) I am finishing my regular treatments with the chiropractor. They seemed to be healing.

But I have come to the point where his pneumatic and thumping machines feel intrusive.

5) Subala challenged Krsna to a fight, but this time Krsna didn't rise to the occasion. Subala called Krsna a coward, and Krsna delighted to hear His friend's chivalrous words. (*Nectar of Devotion*)

### ***Bhagavad-gita, First Chapter***

In our out-loud reading we have finished hearing the First Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*. We hear the estimations of the two sides in the fight, the Kurus and the Pandavas. Dhrtarastra is fearful because the fight is being held on sacred ground, the holy place of Kuruksetra, and he knows the Pandavas are virtuous and Krsna is on their side. But he takes heart that he has great fighters on his side like Bhishma, Dronacarya and Karna to lead his armies. Just before the fight is to begin, Arjuna asks Krsna to draw his chariot between the two armies so he can see who he is about to fight. "When Arjuna gets up close and sees his enemies, who are all his relatives, teachers, friends, etc., he becomes very compassionate. He loses his desire to kill them. This is a display of Arjuna's soft-heartedness, a sign of an elevated soul. Arjuna loses his composure, his Gandiva bow falls from his hand, he cries tears, he sits down on the chariot and says to Krsna, 'Govinda, I shall not fight.' Lord Krsna is displeased with Arjuna's words. He tells Arjuna he is speaking like a learned man, but he is not actually learned.

### **A Visit from Amit**

Amit, the Indian young man who resides in Albany, visited us today. He used to be a lapsed Christian, but when he came to America and associated with his friends at the Hindu temple in Albany, he found a higher taste. Now he is finding an even higher taste by associating with Prabhupada's followers at Viraha Bhavan. He reads Prabhupada's books at home and completely accepts what Prabhupada has written.

He has just come off a nine-day fast of fruits only, in observance of Navaratri. He learned this from his Hindu friends. It's an observance that takes place nine days before Diwali. Worshipers dedicate three days to Durga worship, three to worship of Laksmi, the goddess of fortune, and three to Mother Sarasvati. Amit looked skinny from his fruit fast, but he said he felt purified. He is a genuine seeker, but he just hasn't read enough in Prabhupada's books to get the whole picture and give up his "*kichari* ways." Amit is just getting into spiritual life. He also takes a little bit from the New Age, eating vegan and practicing yoga. He's mostly vegan, but when he visits us he takes straight *krsna-prasadam*. For gurus, Amit is mostly following Srila Prabhupada because he confines his reading to Prabhupada's books. When he reads something in Prabhupada's books that is contrary to his "*kichari*" ways, he takes it seriously and follows what Prabhupada has written. Amit is something like the guru of his five or ten friends in Albany. He wears a prominent pointy beard and a top-knot of hair just like *sadhus* in the pictures.

### **Out-Loud Reading**

We heard Haryasva read from the Fourth Chapter, 34<sup>th</sup> verse of *Bhagavad-gita*: "Just try to learn the truth by approaching the spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth."

In his purport, Srila Prabhupada states that the disciple must come to the spiritual master with submission, service and inquiries into the spiritual knowledge. "Blind following or absurd inquiries will not be effective."

This is a very important verse and purport for understanding *Bhagavad-gita*. "One has to approach a bona-fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge. Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in

spiritual life.”

Many persons, with considerable sincerity, take to spiritual life without approaching a bona fide spiritual master. They are not looking to get cheated, but the cheaters come and teach a “*kichari*” form of spiritual knowledge outside the disciplic succession. Their altars are cluttered with statues of Jesus, Sai Baba, Sivananda, Ganesh, and several others. One yogi friend of ours was driving his daughter to school. As she looked out the window, he asked her what she was thinking of. She replied, “Living in the present.” For her father, this was an “Ah-ha” moment. He decided his daughter was his teacher.

In the Gaudiya Vaisnava *sampradaya*, the *parampara* of bona fide spiritual masters is strongly stressed. This gives an aspiring disciple assurance that he is getting true knowledge as it originated with the first spiritual master, Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Krsna said He first taught the science of yoga to the sun-god Vivasvan over 100 million years ago, and the saintly kings (*rajarshis*) carried the message down without adulteration or interpretation. One must avoid the speculators and cheaters and approach a spiritual master in one of the genuine *sampradayas*: “A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind towards the disciple. Therefore when the student is submissive and is always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect.” (*Bhagavad-gita* 4.34, purport).

## A SECOND LIST

1) *Ramayana*: It appears pitiful, with the kidnapping of Sita and then Her banishment. But Hanuman constantly recites the *Ramayana*

2) When Sisupala was blaspheming Krsna at the Rajasuya sacrifice, Bhima wanted to kill him but Krsna restrained him. Bhima cried tears of anger, and in that aspect he looked very attractive.

3) Jayadvaita Swami said talks of the *gopis* are for the liberated soul. We are still trying to realize we are not these bodies

4) Satyabhama and Rukmini, Krsna's two most intimate queens, maintained a rivalry as to who could get the most intimate treatment from the Lord.

5) At the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, all the soldiers who died in the battle while seeing Krsna were transferred to the spiritual world.

6) Arjuna was Krsna's most intimate friend out of the five Pandava brothers.

7) The *Uddhava-gita* deals with more elevated subjects centered on *bhakti* than the *Bhagavad-gita*.

### **Prison Ministry**

I have a disciple in the Prison Ministry of ISKCON. He receives letters regularly from inmates in prisons. One letter was particularly notable for its suffering. The inmate, named Scott, contacted Covid-19. He was not given any medical treatment, not even aspirin for his severe headaches and pains. For meals, the staff prepared the prisoners one single serving of a box of cereal for breakfast, and a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich. Lunch and dinner consisted of one peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich and one cold-cut sandwich, which the prisoner couldn't eat because he is committed to Krsna consciousness and has taken a vow not to eat meat. His Covid symptoms were so bad that he could not even drink water—it would cause him to dry-heave and vomit bile. His body ached all over from head to toe. He also had a dry cough and his throat itched, and his lungs burned. He lost his sense of smell and taste for weeks. Scott: "I was left to suffer in my cell in the daily 100-plus (degree F.) Texas heat. Only by the mercy of Sri Krsna did I recover. As I lay in my bed suffering, I chanted the *maha-mantra* and called out to Him nonstop." Scott is only one of the many prisoners who contacted Covid-19, as did the staff members of the institution.

***Prabhupada Meditations, Volume 3***

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**“Speaking Up for the Atheist Existentialists**

“I was with Prabhupada as his secretary for two weeks in Bhuvaneshvara. We were far away from any big group of devotees, so those who were with Prabhupada at this remote outpost were able to get his association frequently and personally. For morning walks, we went through the park. Prabhupada stopped to look at the flowers and said, ‘How can they say there is no God?’

“We went through a zoo once, but mainly we walked in the park. The ground was unpaved, and the weather was warm, although it was January. Prabhupada looked beautiful in his saffron. He was beginning to have that illness which was an indication of his last days with us, and this was his last year. He was, nevertheless, in full spirits and alert consciousness. The illness hampered him only because he could not travel as much or do all the things he wanted to do.

“On one walk, Prabhupada was scoffing at the theory of chance as a basis for life and creation. Bhagavata dasa said, ‘Actually, Isaac Newton disproved that theory of chance.’ Hari-sauri mentioned a book that he had read, *Life Has No Meaning*. Prabhupada responded with a mere, ‘Humph.’

“Then Prabhupada said, ‘Does that mean life has no meaning, but the rascal’s words in the book do have meaning?’

“I took this as a cue to enter with some of my pet intellectual attachments.

“‘Life has no meaning, but we have to give it meaning.’ I was trying to present the case of the atheist existentialists to Prabhupada. It was not that long ago that I had been reading those books and believing in them. I was not presenting their case as something I thought unimportant; it was something within my own psyche.

“I said, ‘That is the glory of man: he finds the meaning. He gives the meaning to the meaningless.’ When I said that, I felt a twinge of pride at my eloquence. I even thought that the other devotees could not really appreciate me because I was so intellectual and eloquent. I was not like others who might give Prabhupada crude, distorted things to think about—I was giving him some straight existentialism, relevant to the times in which Prabhupada was living.

“Prabhupada was not impressed with me though. He did not respond. Some of the other devotees repeated their lines about a book called *Life Has No Meaning* and how it had won the Nobel Prize.

“I spoke out again. This was unusual for me, but since there were so few of us on the walk, and since the devotees who were present were not heavy competitors, I felt more inclined to step forward and speak on behalf of the existentialists.

“I said, ‘They say you have to face up to that uncertainty of no meaning, and just live your life without taking meaning from the *sastra*.’

“Simply take from him.’ Prabhupada responded.

“Each person has to find within himself the meaning,” I said. Existential atheism was usually the furthest thing from my mind. I was faithfully engaged in duties as Prabhupada’s secretary, typing his letters, massaging him, but now all these old attachments started bubbling up. Rather than be silenced by Prabhupada’s first rebukes, I persisted.

“Then why you are distributing the meaning?’ Prabhupada asked. This was his usual method, to address the person he was talking to by forcing him to identify with the person he was presenting. I was waiting to play that role.

“Why are you anxious to give some meaning?’ Prabhupada repeated. With this remark, Prabhupada exposed the motivation of the preachers of ‘no meaning.’ If they

believed in what they said, they should let people live their own lives without coming to take the Nobel Prize for being spokesman. This silenced me and I fell into saying, ‘Ummm.’ Was it true that the ‘no meaning’ philosophers had such a low motivation? Prabhupada said that they simply should not speak.”

“Sometimes you read in history about the wonderful atmosphere of ancient days in Athens when Socrates would walk with his students. However, in Bhuanesvara Park in 1977, we knew something more transcendental than ancient Athens. Being with Prabhupada when he allowed us to express ourselves and when he answered these theories transported us beyond time and space. We lived in ideas in the invigorating form of a mock debate with the spiritual master.

“ . . . Then he has to follow you," Prabhupada replied. "Because by taking your instruction, I shall stop following others. I will have to follow you."

“Yes," I agreed.

“Then what is the benefit? Instead of following others, I shall follow you. My following is still there."

“Hmmm,' I said. ‘They claim they do not want to be leaders, but actually they do.’

“That means rascal. What he says, that is contradictory, that is rascal.”

“Prthu-putra, a French-born *sannyasi*, added, ‘Camus committed suicide at the end of his life . . .’

“Prabhupada was not sufficiently interested to continue that discussion. We went on in silence for a little while. Prabhupada greeted a passerby, ‘Jai.’

“Eventually, we began talking again on a different topic. On the previous day, Prabhupada had asked to hear some of the charges the anti-cultists were making

against our movement, and I began mentioning some of them. Our conversation continued in that direction until the end of the walk.”

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### **“Prabhupada and Govinda’s Movement**

“The purpose of Prabhupada meditation is to see Prabhupada as a person. He is simultaneously one with and different from his movement. His movement consists of all the devotees working on his behalf, and Prabhupada sits like a lotus on the water in the midst of it all. He is untouched by any quarelling or contamination. He writes his books, honors *prasadam*, sits in a simple room at a low desk, talks to devotees, corresponds, plans, gets involved—but he is always transcendental. Prabhupada meditations focus on him moving in the midst of his Krsna conscious devotees and in the world to spread Krsna consciousness.

“We suggest that everyone can meditate on Prabhupada in a personal relationship. Prabhupada meditation is a sanctuary from material hassles and from the frustrations that occur in socializing and dealing within his movement. Prabhupada meditations can occur just by reading a few pages of *Prabhupada-lilamrta* or any memoir about Prabhupada.

“Prabhupada states in the Krsna book that any bona fide book about Krsna, ‘even this book, *Krsna*,’ can be a solace for devotees feeling separation from the Lord. We read the *Krsna* book and hear of Krsna’s activities while working within Krsna’s movement. Similarly, we hear about Prabhupada’s activities while we carry on his work in contemporary forms. Prabhupada himself is the classic, inviolable essence of his own movement. He is always a person, the great teacher, the simple pure-hearted

devotee. The person who is mysterious to us because his intimacy with Krsna is beyond our vision, that person we want to remember.

“Sometimes we can study Prabhupada’s work and teachings at leisure. More often we have to remember Prabhupada while on the run, while in the struggle to live and preach. We have to renounce the pleasure of sitting at the lotus feet of the spiritual master. We have to go out and preach on his behalf. Sometimes this work on behalf of the guru creates a kind of separation from him, and that is only relieved by remembrance.

“When Prabhupada was in South India, he once conversed with Gopala Acarya, the famous Hindu author and political leader. Gopala Acarya asked Srila Prabhupada, ‘Is it possible that your devotees may become so absorbed in the movement of Govinda that they forget Govinda Himself?’ Prabhupada replied that that would not happen because Govinda’s movement was absolute. Thinking of His movement is the same as thinking of Govinda. Prabhupada’s answer was right to the point, and it is an ideal we have to continue to strive to achieve.

“History proves that religious institutions do lose their original spirit. Initial enthusiasm solidifies into institutional forms, committees, structures, rules, relations with the public, etc. When this is done as service to Govinda, it is a meditation on Him. We have to work and meditate at the same time. By finding the service of Prabhupada that enlivens us, we will be able to achieve simultaneously work and meditation on guru and Krsna.”

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**“Srila Prabhupada and His Disciples**

“Our meditation on Prabhupada should be pleasing to him. When Lord Brahma praised Krsna, He remained silent and grave. It appeared that the Supreme Lord was not much impressed by Brahma’s speech. Nevertheless, Brahma’s words on that occasion are glorious, as preserved in Tenth Canto, Fourteenth Chapter of Srimad-Bhagavatam. Our own homages to our spiritual master cannot be as eloquent as those spoken by Lord Brahma, but how will we know if Prabhupada and Lord Krsna are pleased by our words?

“One criteria is if we cooperate with the society of devotees. If we make a disturbance in the society of devotees, then our praise of Prabhupada become a travesty.

“Lord Krsna is not alone; He is always with His devotees. Similarly, Prabhupada’s followers are part of his eternal entourage. Too much criticism of his followers is a type of criticism against Prabhupada. We may think that we have built an indomitable fortress around Prabhupada in our minds—we can defend him from all critics. Nevertheless, if we allow ourselves free potshots at his disciples, then we are not protecting Prabhupada.

“Protecting the disciples of Prabhupada does not mean blindly accepting whatever they do. We are sometimes compelled by conscience to say some devotees are not following Prabhupada. This, though, is a difficult area to enter. We may easily fall into *aparadha*. The best thing is to set a good example among our devotee friends and try to honor all devotees.

“. . . When we combine respect for Prabhupada with respect for his disciples, then we have the perfect union. One way to do this is to recall Prabhupada in his pastimes with his disciples. Lord Caitanya’s pastimes are not only about Himself, but are about His disciples and relationships among them. “We hear how Sanatana

Gosvami was very humble in his dealings with Lord Caitanya, how Jagadananda Pandita was affectionate in his dealings with the Lord, how Govinda served the Lord without any sense gratification. Similarly we can remember how Tamala Krishna Goswami was willing to face fire for Prabhupada. We may recall how Prabhupada was pleased with the friendly service of Srutikirti. Prabhupada praised Pradyumna dasa: ‘I call him Panditji because he is actually *pandita*. He has worked hard to produce this *Caitanya-caritamrta*, and his wife also.’ Prabhupada gave tremendous encouragement to those devotees who distributed his books; he assured them that it was the best service. Therefore we may think of these devotees and how they tried to please Prabhupada. That forms a natural part of our Prabhupada meditation.

“When we remember Prabhupada as the leader of many devotees, it relieves us from our false self-images. Usually we are not so insane as to think we are the best devotees, yet we persist in putting ourselves in the center of a meditation. Even when we think of ourselves as ‘the most fallen devotee,’ still we are thinking of ourselves first and Prabhupada second. However, when we actively remember how Prabhupada dealt with many people, it makes us cheerful and relieves us of egotism. We take our actual position.

**“Try This:** In some small way, try to please a devotee of Prabhupada. For example, pleasant words of appreciation are a nice offering, either spoken or written. Try giving a gift or share *prasadam*. Any of the exchanges of love described in *The Nectar of Devotion* go a long way toward improving relationships with Prabhupada and his disciples.”

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### **“Did Prabhupada Make Predictions for Success in Chanting That Did Not Come True?”**

“Srila Prabhupada always encouraged us in chanting the Hare Krsna mantra. He told audiences that the boys and girls who are chanting Hare Krsna are experiencing pleasure and absorption in love of God. What could be obtained previously only through great austerity can now be achieved simply by chanting Hare Krsna. As proof of this, Prabhupada offered the example of thousands of his disciples who are chanting Hare Krsna and giving up attraction to material life.

“Sometimes, I doubt whether these things are actually coming true. Were they true when Prabhupada was present but not true now? Were they never true? If they are true, how to understand them, or should we not make attempts to analyze?

“Prabhupada’s statements are true because they are based on *sastra*. In *sastra* we find much encouragement that the lowborn or low-class persons can successfully chant Hare Krsna. Even if a person is born in a family of dog-eaters and chants Hare Krsna once, he becomes qualified to perform Vedic *yajnas*. Those who are chanting Hare Krsna in this lifetime must have accomplished all Vedic practices in previous lifetimes. There is no doubt that the Vaisnava *acaryas*, and especially the followers of Lord Caitanya, praise the power of the holy name over all other spiritual practices. What Prabhupada has added to all of this is the claim that now these teachings are actually taking place: people from all races and religions all over the world are chanting Hare Krsna and getting good results.

Sociologists have their empirical methods for assessing the effects of chanting. They might follow a group of devotees for twenty years. They give them

questionnaires and interviews and judge how they progress in spiritual life from year to year. In this way they try to build statistical evidence for theories. That is not the Vaisnava way—at least it is not my way.

“One way to reply to doubts is to speak for yourself. When your experience confirms what is stated by the *sastra* and by the spiritual master, then you have strong evidence. I want to be a successful ‘statistic’ to prove Prabhupada correct. If I can do that, then my confidence will be strong. If someone claims that most devotees do not get benefit from chanting as Prabhupada predicted, I can reply, ‘I know the benefits have been there for me.’ Unfortunately, I cannot claim significant progress in my own chanting. I look at some of the positive statements Prabhupada makes about chanting, and I feel sorry.

“I know, however, that Prabhupada is not making false predictions. One has to look carefully at his use of language. He may say that if a devotee sincerely chants, then he will get the good result. In one purport Prabhupada states that chanting is very simple, but one has to take it seriously.

“There may be something wrong in ourselves rather than Prabhupada’s statements. Our long inability to experience the benefits of chanting may be a cause for concern, but that should not lead us to doubt the spiritual master or the *namacarya*, Haridasa Thakura, whom he represents. In fact, our individual failure is also predicted by the *acaryas*. They say that if one does not take advantage of this easy system of chanting Hare Krsna, then there is no other hope for him.

“The Vaisnava *acaryas* sympathize with people like me. They have stated on our behalf, ‘I do not have attraction for the chanting of Hare Krsna, therefore I must be cursed by Yamaraja.’ Lord Caitanya speaks for the conditioned souls and says, ‘I do not have a taste for chanting because of committing offenses.’

“We have also been encouraged by Prabhupada that the real symptoms of successful chanting are not the attainment of ecstatic bodily symptoms. Steady results of chanting are shown when a devotee utilizes his time always in Krsna’s service, and when he patiently depends on Krsna’s mercy. Another general symptom is detachment from material life.

“Let us not avoid the difficult or make up excuses. Prabhupada did not predict cheap overnight success. Let me enter that ‘workshop’ mood once again, even though I have tried before. Do whatever will help. Keep notebooks, time myself with a stopwatch, increase my quota of rounds, get up as early as possible, talk about chanting with interested devotees, study the scriptures to this end, and go on chanting Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.”

***Prabhupada Meditations, Volume 4***

p. 257

**“Prabhupada Stories, Even If You Weren't There**

“How can you tell a story about Prabhupada if you weren’t actually there to witness it? The obvious answer is that you can repeat what you have heard from biographies, memoirs or from devotees who were actually with Srila Prabhupada. Although the direct witness has advantages in storytelling, the re-teller can make up for that by his enthusiasm. A book on writing describes it in this way:

“Several years ago I wrote down a story that someone had told me. My friends said it was boring. I couldn’t understand their reaction; I loved the story. I realize now is that I wrote “about” the story

secondhand. I didn't enter it and make friends with it. I was outside it; therefore, I couldn't take anyone else into it. This does not mean you cannot write about something that you did not actually experience firsthand; only make sure that you breathe life into it. Otherwise, it is two times removed, and you are not present.' (*Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg)

“Telling any story is a delicate operation. We have to have faith in the story we are telling and enter into it. And it must be accurate. Sometimes we hear a devotee retell a story like this: ‘One time, Prabhupada said to Guru dasa, “You say you want to be at my lotus feet, but my lotus feet are always moving.” When Prabhupada said that, he pushed Guru dasa away with his lotus feet.’ The difficulty with that last detail, is that no one who was actually present for the episode said that Prabhupada actually pushed Guru dasa with his feet. In this way, stories sometimes get blown into tall tales. They may become very different from what actually happened. Therefore, it is good to be enthusiastic when telling Prabhupada stories, but we should never exaggerate or make up details. Our enthusiasm may capture the ears of some, and may even impress some people, but if the story has untrue elements, then people will have a false impression. The story has to be authentic, and the storyteller has to be honest.”

***Srila Prabhupada Samadhi Diary***

p. 89

“I pray to you, Prabhupada, to help me approach you in a friendly and honest way, full of genuine adoration. You are giving me Krsna, and that is the greatest

thing. Please keep me true and appreciative and alive. I pray to Lord Balarama to please fix me in *guru-nistha*.

“This ‘tomb’ is a public place, suitable for accommodating large groups of people who don’t have much time or presence of mind. At least they can receive your darsana. I shouldn’t be upset at the casual mood here. They are always respectful. But for them it’s like going into a public monument. The whole country of India can come and go here, and everyone will pay respect to you, a great saint who went abroad and made mlecchas into devotees of Krsna. I’m beginning to understand the genius and vision of this building.

“A Sikh with a pink turban, black beard, and a wife. Men in white pajama-like pants and kurtas. Children, one crying a little. It’s hard for them to pay attention, they are so wrapped up in family maintenance and trying to enjoy within religious bounds. We are more serious on the subtle plane, though. I have the equivalent of these distracted people—a pink-turbaned thought, a fat-bellied woman, a crying child, mosquitoes. Prabhupada’s Mandir. You kindly allow us to be here, even though our mood is not concentrated. Prabhupada is in growing *samadhi*. We cannot attain an inner *samadhi*, but at least we can observe his mood and take in a little of it.”

***READING REFORM: Srila Prabhupada’s Plan for the Daily Reading of His Books***

p. 125

“But you need not become such a scholar. You require simply to understand *sastras*, *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, etc., and to chant Hare Krsna *maha-mantra* as much as possible. The thing is, if you give more stress on scholarly line, other devotees will try to imitate you. Already your wife has expressed such intentions. As soon as we try

to be scholars, our devotional line will be slackened. These points are to be kept in view always . . . . Regarding your last point that you should try to learn the various literatures very carefully and present everywhere in classes and books, that is very good.’ (Letter to Pradyumna, April 1, 1970)

**COMMENTARY:** Although Prabhupada appreciated his disciples’ efforts to present his books in a scholarly way, he would occasionally warn them about indulging in the study of Sanskrit. Sometimes he would chide his scholars for building private libraries. Prabhupada once jokingly compared his disciple Panditji’s book collection as an ‘ass’s burden,’ and in his letter to Pradyumna, Prabhupada writes, ‘Do you think you shall require all these books? Of course, I have no objection if you keep these as reference books, but we should always remember that we have to give more stress on our spiritual side than on our scholastic side . . . Don’t forget to chant sixteen rounds regularly, then you will get spiritual strength more and more.’ Prabhupada in this way set his priorities.”

### ***Churning the Milk Ocean***

p.32

“I always find things when I read Prabhupada’s books that I don’t remember reading before. Some of them express the philosophy in a way that I don’t remember hearing, and it strikes me. Some of them I find vital to my present attempts at Krsna consciousness. Some of them discuss things that I am weak in, so I mark it to remind myself.

“It’s hard to say what it is I am looking for, but I could boil it down to this: I’m looking for a state of ecstasy, and I’m looking to get beyond dryness and lack of love. Anything that looks like it will help, I underline.

“It’s possible I could become feverish in my looking, or start looking only for stimulating passages. I try to remind myself that reading is a quiet occupation. I want to serve Prabhupada’s books and savor his words without thinking I have found a new way to get high. Spiritual sense gratification is, after all, another kind of selfishness. I want to please Krsna. To do that, I have to hear about Him.

“Having stated that caution, I do admit that I am looking for an inner thrill—nothing cheap—but the thrill of falling in love with Prabhupada’s teachings. I would like to live my whole life absorbed in Krsna consciousness by reading Prabhupada’s books. I would like reading to be more of a joy to **me** than the simple daily joys of eating and sleeping. ‘When, O when, will that day be mine?’”

### ***A Visit to Jagannatha Puri: A Pilgrimage Journal***

p. 15

“Sometimes Hindus concede that a lowborn person may become a Vaisnava, but they claim he should still be barred from various places and positions until he takes a future birth in an upper caste family in India. There appears to be partial support of this in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, but Prabhupada explains it in a purport:

“It is stated in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* that ‘One should not accept initiation from a person who is not in the brahminical order if there is a fit person in the brahminical order present.’ This instruction is meant

for those who are overly dependent on the mundane social order and is suitable for those who want to remain in mundane life. If one understands the truth of Krsna consciousness and seriously desires to attain transcendental knowledge for the perfection of life, he can accept a spiritual master from any social status, provided the spiritual master is fully conversant with the science of Krsna. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also states that if one is situated as a *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya*, or *sudra*, *brahmacari*, *grhastha*, *vanaprastha* or *sannyasi* if he is not conversant in the science of Krsna, he can become a spiritual master as a *vartma-pradarsaka* guru . . . Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, this Krsna consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world. This does not mean that people should take advantage of His teachings and remain *sudras* or *candalas*. As soon as one is trained as a pure Vaisnava, he must be accepted as a bona fide *brahmana*. (*Cc. Madhya-lila*, 8.128, purport)

“We have come to the lake near the Jagannatha-Vallabha temple. Tall coconut trees, reflected in the water, turn the water green.

“A skinny man with a stick prevents us  
from entering the temple of Ramananda Raya.  
And since I am a wise-guy American  
he makes me proud  
of my own nationality.

Prabhupada warns: Don't think  
because you are American goswamis  
that you are better.

And neither should the Indian think  
he is better than you.

“At the lakeside, a dogfight!  
Five mongrels growl, claw and bite,  
and a sixth dog runs  
barking from a distance  
to join the biting melee.  
Why compete? Are we any better?”

### ***ISKCON in the 1970s: Diaries***

p.226

#### **“January 1977, Amsterdam**

“Very good class by Harikesa Goswami. One can see that he is working hard to spread Krsna consciousness, is taking all risks, and is not afraid to suffer. Therefore he's inspired by his work and inspires the devotees.

Remember: in two weeks I see Srila Prabhupada. I want to ask him:

1) Whether our aggressive book distribution in the U.S. is producing the desired effect. People are more and more seeing and thinking of us as harassers out for money on the plea of religious freedom.

2) It is possible that despite so many books being distributed, we are ruining opinion toward us for years to come.

3) Can we change the face of our preaching in the U.S. and do something people will appreciate more? All they see of us is shaking their hands (wearing wigs) and taking money. Should we be more active in another field?

Then academically, on behalf of the Library Party, I want to ask him if he wants only the BBT to distribute *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamrta* everywhere. If so, the field will be closed in a few years. Is the purpose fulfilled there, or should an attempt be made to continue for years, supplying professors with other books? If so, there are proposals:

- 1) Sanskrit publications
- 2) Books by disciples and other scholars
- 3) Other translations to books by Srila Prabhupada

If yes,

- 1) Can we start developing it?
- 2) Should devotees go to school?
- 3) What works should be done, especially from the Caitanya school?

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### **“January-February 1977**

“If you want to know my secret . . .’ I regard this section of the diary as particularly potent because much of it is verbatim from Prabhupada or directly paraphrased. This is the kind of diary I wish I had always kept when I was with Prabhupada. It was a deliberate act on my part to go into the servant’s room

immediately after being with him, or whenever I had a chance, and type up what I remembered. One simply can't remember details like this weeks or years later. If only I had kept a diary like this from the beginning in 1966!

“ . . . Prabhupada took his bath in a little shack by pouring water from a bucket. Afterwards the water was thrown on a certain plot of bare ground. After about a week of throwing the refuse water there, a little green plant came up. Prabhupada called for me one time just to point this out.

“He called me and noted that on the bare ground, some green had started growing. He said it was because for only a few days, someone had thrown water there. *Parjanya ad anna-sambhavaḥ*: grains are coming from the water. Why doesn't the scientist produce grains? This is important water. Everywhere there could be green-producing land, and everyone could have enough to eat.

This is especially relevant in this barren, impoverished Bhuvaneshvara, where so much land is bare because there is no water. All we need is water. Why can't man do it?

“I said it is too big a job for the scientist. He said he is not against the scientists' achievements, but they say there is no God. They claim to know everything. Their actual achievements are only childish play—airplanes and cars. These are childish achievements because the real problems of life have been put aside by them, although they are making all claims to have solved them. Their achievements do not even raise them to the level of human beings. One has to know God and his self in

relation to God. They do not take God's authority but imagine in their own way. We have to accept it?

“Expose them. They cannot actually know. For example, all the phenomena of the sky—the sky is so vast—so many stars and planets are there; they cannot know what it is. What do they do? They imagine what it is. This we have to accept—their imagination of something that is too much for them? Srila Prabhupada said, ‘I am giving you an idea, now you elaborate.’ He means we should try writing and realizing these examples in the direction he has indicated.”

### ***Entering the Life of Prayer***

p. 144

“What I am trying to establish now is the most basic thing, loving consciousness and loving service. It must be there, no matter what your service is. I admit in my case that after so many years, I have discovered a very basic lack, as well as a hope of how to revive it. It's a reconstitution of my whole devotional service by a simple process of *consciousness of loving service, by praying to Krsna as much as possible*. In a sense it has nothing to do with what kind of service you render Krsna. First this has to be established, and then we can talk about service in one department or another. Nowadays I am trying to make this my only service. But if I can establish this consciousness, then I can do more active service. If I can't think of Krsna at the same time as doing other things, though, then I have to give it full time. That's what I am saying, and no one should talk me out of this. This is not so easily understood, and it's not going to be handed down to me by someone else. I have discovered the hint of it by the grace of other devotees who told me about it and reminded me that I

am really far from the humble devotee that I should be. So I am trying to establish a most basic thing and giving full time for it.”

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“Among our own Godbrothers, we have the example of Jayananda Prabhu, who is very modest. He never went into Prabhupada’s room to include himself in personal meetings with Prabhupada. Prabhupada didn’t talk so much about him, but considered him beloved. When Jayananda disappeared, Prabhupada said that we should observe his holiday like other holidays of Vaisnava saints.

“These thoughts all have a relevance as I try to think of my next service. It shouldn’t be a service that will catch the attention of everyone—a sensational book or a very prominent contribution. Rather, think of ways that I can offer significant service in a spiritual way while remaining hidden. I have to be careful about this so I don’t refuse to do important service or hang back out of false humility. However, what I just said should be the goal; and the quality of loving service is what counts: detachment from material desires, taste for the holy name, and absorption in preaching.”

## Writing Sessions

### *My Purpose at Isola di Albarella (continued)*

**“October 24, 1996**

“As they happen to me each day, things are meaningful. Later I forget the essence of it and so, it’s no longer important. They may be compared to when you

have a dream. The dream is meaningful, but if you don't take the time to record it, it completely disappears. Therefore, I write things down at the time when they still have meaning to me, while they're happening. Then later there'll be a record which will be helpful to read for Krsna consciousness.

“Last night around 6:15, I went down to greet Madhusudana dasa. Each week that we're here a different devotee comes to be with us to cook and clean, all my disciples.

I have been entertaining the idea that by kicking this medication I was well enough to go back into Italy and visit Matsya Avatara Prabhu and others. But I'm not in that shape yet.

*“5:55 A.M.*

“Just came from the physical exercises. Madhusudana dasa could see me bending forward and back. Old-timer, let the words fly. You are right. A red light is flashing. You said you'll say the truth and let it go? After I die the well-wishers will say, 'He sacrificed his spiritual life to give us this and that is the best you can do.' All right, but don't throw away life for some literary endeavors. Save yourself, I kept telling Madhusudana last night. It's the most important thing, even more important than preaching. First, you save yourself. He looked back at me a bit blank on that one. I can't tell him how to find a wife or local friends in Krsna consciousness. I just tell him you have to be a devotee under any circumstance. So, try to improve but now chant and hear. I don't want to get entangled in many troubled lives. Feel them pulling me into the ocean. Oh, it should be that way? But you have to skillfully give

them help and not be weighed down by their bodies and troubles. How to do it so that you don't appear uncompassionate? Give them some instructions.

“We read that Lord Caitanya was *nirapeksa*, He was indifferent to the wailing in the house of Advaita Acarya when He left for Jagannatha Puri. This was His neutrality towards worldly morality and affection. A different thing, but related to what I'm trying to do. Save yourself, I tell myself. Keep away from things that are not KC. Keep away from the music and jumpers and whompers and gentle faces and no teeth and hives and skives and managers and you should be less fault-finding. Cut that out, that sharp edge of putting down everyone and being glad when you hear they are ill or die. You think, 'Oh, he is dead but I am living.' And you even think, 'Yes, he's dead and I'll be dead soon enough too.' And it's all void. SP attacked atheists right off who say there is no life. He said we are fighting them on all fronts. So, let me fight them within myself, and to those who are unkind, who don't care, say, "Here is the medicine." Oh, let me practice now. Krsna has sent Madhusudana to live with us for a few days. So, impart to him what you can. The last man who was here, Dinanatha, said as he left that he had no material desires while he was here.

“Now I have nothing to say and I keep going. You stretched your sinews to the left and right. Left hand down touching the right toe and then the opposite. Hey, when the bell rings at the end of the typewriter line, wake up and return the carriage, you get it? Yeah, and as for Navy memories when they come, blow them away.

“In fact, I will make an endeavor to cut them out entirely. You are good and I am good. I am practicing *bhakti* under my spiritual master, and he is sufficient certainly. Now he is lecturing in Sanand, India and I hear him on tape saying that

we should have *asakti* for Krsna, not for cats and dogs. He's saying that it's natural that we love someone, but Krsna should be the object of that love. That's what he said and I'm repeating it. All those guys, Robert Lax and so on, have only a partial idea. The full idea is in *Bhagavad-gita*. I told that too to Madhusudana last night, read the *Gita*, and Krsna will tell you who God is—He will banish your doubts. It's not mere *jnana*. You say you feel weak? Well, Arjuna also felt weak, but then he submitted to Krsna and everything became clear. Hare Krsna. The truth will come out. The Lord will save the devotee from his worldly sojourn and pick him up from the ocean of death. The Lord will ride on Garuda and swoop down; the Lord does it and we don't have to worry how it will be done. But surrender to Him. That's called *asrita*, to take shelter of one who is taking shelter of Krsna.

“10:15 A.M.

“While reading *Cc.* recently I regularly saw references to the highest conclusions of *madhurya-rasa*, given as SP wanted us to have it, and straight from the nectar that is *Cc.*, that is, Lord Caitanya in His mood of Radharani.

“So, you've got to read not only that stuff. But there is no harm in regularly reading *Cc.* No harm at all! And Krsna speaks directly to me in *Bhagavad-gita*, smashing doubts. All the books. And if I can stay close and true to SP, I can venture into reading books like *Caitanya-bhagavata*, and *Vidagdha-madhava* and see it in his way.

“Reading his books is a wonderful career for me. I can use retreats in that way.

“I told Madhu that I wrote a letter today to Manu appreciating him as perhaps the only reader nowadays of my private edition books. I mentioned the

reasons why they cannot be widely read: 1) secret of retreats; 2) raw confessions; 3) too many words, etc. I said, however, that they were each written as books to be read. Madhu countered and said aren't they written even beyond the desire to create a book? He mentioned *Forgetting the Audience*. Yes, I admitted that. Both are true. They are individual books shaped for people to read; and they are also written for myself as an act of writing. Both. All.

“Jack Kerouac influence creaking in. Let it creak out. Let *SB* creak in. The book I read in '66 and slowed down to learn of the Lord, Lord Krsna, First Canto, Indian edition. Been going on with it since then. Still read it.

“Life is lonely.

“That's the way it is. You thought (during the thirteenth *japa* round today in the backyard), why not stay three weeks in Vrndavana instead of two in February? Answer is I can't take it, the socializing, the inevitable arrival of big Godbrothers who might want to meet with me, my limits with headaches, the politics and the pressure to attend the morning program. So, I will get out from living in Vrndavana for an extended time. I can't (don't want to) live in Vrndavana away from ISKCON. I want to write.

“I feel some ebbing in the writing life. But it is my life, writing and reading, reading and writing.

“I can't do either one of them unlimitedly. Tried to live the life of full-time reading Prabhupada's books in Geaglum. Could have stayed there permanently. But I lack ability (so far) to dive completely into that sort of life.

“Some travel and temple visits, just enough to whet my appetite for the next retreat. And I do like that service of lecturing again. The present balance is good, and Madhu knows how to maintain it.

“My purpose at Isola di Albarella – to find balance again, my desire to live in solitude, to read and write, to come out of it to lecture.

*3:30 P.M.*

“Serving Srila Prabhupada in separation. It’s not me in alienation from ISKCON and Godbrothers that is causing my main dissatisfaction. Then what is it? Oh, it’s the fact that SP has left the earth and so, we’re all dissatisfied. But he’s here in his service form, the mission.

“SP didn’t feel like a ship without a rudder even though BSS was not in the world and even though the Gaudiya Math broke up. So, follow his example.

“Work in your way to contribute to his movement. Don’t give up.

“And yes, you’ll feel separation.

“But even when he was here it was a strain to serve in competition with Godbrothers.

“Real difficulty is I’m not *atma-nivedanam*, not totally surrendered. Don’t have higher taste. Unwilling or unable to pay the price for love of Krsna.

“Therefore, Krsna doesn’t want to reciprocate intimately with me until I’m more purified of material desires.”