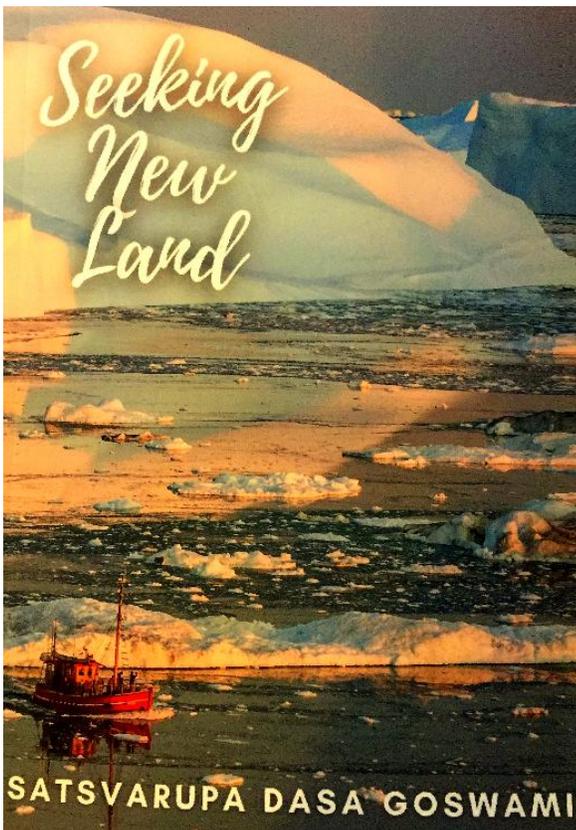


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DEAR DEVOTEES: A MESSAGE FROM SATSVARUPA MAHARAJA.

“I was very disappointed that our July gathering and then our December in-person Vyasa-puja was canceled. But I earnestly ask my disciples to order *Kaleidoscope* and *Seeking New Land*. Please be aware that *Kaleidoscope* can be only be ordered from Amazon. The price is \$12.95. To order *Seeking New Land*, please send your home address and a check for \$10 made out to “GNP” to Baladeva Vidyabhusana dasa, PO Box 233, Stuyvesant Falls, NY 12174. John Endler will mail the book to you. This will bring us close together as guru and disciples. These are new books and I expect a big response from my disciples to make up for the cancelled summer meeting. Please don’t disappoint me—order these books.”



From Rev. John Endler:

Dear Devotees,

Seeking New Land represents a bold new step in the writing of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and is the sixth volume in the ongoing retrospective of his literary series, *Every Day, Just Write*. *Seeking New Land* may be considered a narrative poem and the reader follows the journey of an itinerant monk who pursues new means of self-expression as part of a larger journey to discern a renewed vocation within his religious tradition and the institution which he serves. This book is characterized by a literary complexity and existential subtleties which are the hallmarks of the author’s artistic and theological vision. A volume that is challenging and profound, the reader is invited to discover his or her own spiritual pilgrimage within these pages, as the author pushes every literary boundary to boldly create something wholly new and inspiring.

To order a copy of this book, please send a check for \$10 made out to “GN Press” to:

Baladeva Vidyabhusana dasa
P.O. Box 233
Stuyvesant Falls, NY 12174

Please email me at johnendler@comcast.net with your mailing address, and I will gladly ship this book to your doorstep.

Happy Reading!
JE

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Free Write Journal #126

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Free Writes

My Books

A disciple wrote me and said he found my poetry books “too esoteric.” He doesn’t read them, except occasionally. But I like them and look for favorable readers. I feel in the spirit of William Carlos Williams’ short poem to his wife:

“I wanted to write a poem
that you could understand
because what is the use otherwise?
But you’ve got to try real hard!”

Over the years I have written many, many books in different genres. Many of these books were out of print because they were printed in short runs of about 200 copies each. They haven’t been available for decades. But now they’re all available in electronic form on SDGLegacy.com. All these books, including the poetry books, have been written as my main association with my disciples and friends. Now that we are getting older, we should reconnect with the books, either by reading them or distributing them to friends. Every book has touched someone’s heart and brought them closer to Prabhupada and Krsna. So the poetry books can do the same if they’re read and distributed.

Much energy is put into writing the weekly *Free Write Journal*, which can keep readers

connected closely and up-to-date on activities at Viraha Bhavan. But again, it requires effort on my readers' part to actually read the *Journal* in order to keep the relationship current and alive.

Out-Loud Reading

In our group out-loud reading we are hearing how Lord Caitanya led His followers in cleaning the Gundica temple in preparation for the Ratha-yatra festival. The Lord was given one hundred pots of water, which He and His followers constantly refilled. They threw the water on the ceilings and walls of the temple. This was done after first cleaning up the straw and dirt with brooms. The Lord was the leader in cleaning, and He outdid all the others by far. He taught them and praised those who cleaned the most, and criticized those who cleaned only a little. The Lord wiped the wall with His own cloth until it was shining clean. It was being prepared for the sitting place of Jagannatha, and so it had to be spotlessly clean. The pastime is described as Gundica-marjanam. After sweeping and cleaning the temple once, Lord Caitanya had all the devotees sit in two lines. He sat in the middle and started picking up remaining pieces of dirt and straw and ordered His followers to clean the place again. They not only cleaned the temple room but the road outside and the buildings nearby, the living quarters, the *kirtana* hall and the *bhoga* room. More pots of water were thrown on the walls, and again they were wiped down with cloths. Lord Caitanya told the devotees that by cleaning the Gundica they were cleaning their heart and preparing it as a suitable place for Lord Jagannatha to stay.

Krsnafest

The late Gunagrahi Maharaja started the Krsnafest in the late 1980s. They used to go out every day in good weather to the Washington D.C. monuments with a diorama of "Changing Bodies" and a table of Prabhupada's books. They sang *kirtana*. The Krsnafest group had about ten men, and in the winter they relocated to Dallas, Texas and did the same program. Gunagrahi

Maharaja taught Sankarsana how to make an excellent *kichari* every day, and on Sunday he made a very good, crispy pizza. We had that pizza yesterday at Viraha Bhavan, and we're having his *kichari* also. In pre-COVID years Sankarsana used to go to India, buy devotional paraphernalia and then sell it at the Ratha-yatras. It was an honest *grhastha's* way of income. He even started it before he got married so that he'd have money once he got married. Aside from playing the *mrdanga*, Gunagrahi Maharaja played an African drum. Everything at Krsnafest was done professionally. They even had their own "Krsnafest" T-shirts. In addition to his business, Sankarsana goes out daily on *harinama*. Mostly he goes alone with a keyboard instrument. In recent years while visiting L.A., he saw the devotees singing the Hare Krsna mantra to popular tunes. This drew the attention of passersby who stopped to listen and appreciate. Sankarsana brought the idea back to the East Coast. Now he practices two hours a day. He has taken voice lessons online and learned how to hit the low notes and the high notes. He has accumulated a number of popular songs set to the Hare Krsna mantra in his repertoire. Maduha has allowed him to join the Festival of India, where he sells his paraphernalia and helps them set up their tents and displays.

Sankirtana

Devotees sometimes ask us what kind of *kirtana* do we hold at Viraha Bhavan. Bala and his wife, Krsna dasi, hold a small morning program at which they sing all the prayers that are done in the temples. But not everyone participates. Our main *sankirtana* is the out-loud reading of the *Bhagavatam*, which we each get a chance to do on our electronic hookup. This is blissful and satisfying. The other *kirtana* going on here is the playing of the *brhad-mrdanga*. This means I am writing and publishing of the weekly *Journal* and several books a year. Prabhupada said the *brhad-mrdanga* is the major *sankirtana* because it can be heard all over the world, whereas a street *sankirtana* by a group of devotees can only be heard for a block. Prabhupada wrote in a

purport that the main duty of a *sannyasi* is to write books in Krsna consciousness. Devotees are supporting me with donations, proofreading, book design and book distribution. Sankirtana is many things, not just mass chanting at Ratha-yatra. It was Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati who coined the phrase “*brhad-mrdanga*” and had a drawing of a printing press included in the logo of the Gaudiya Math for the Gaudiya Math activities. Our Prabhupada gave much attention to building temples, especially in India. But his highest priority was the production and distribution of his books.

Good News--I'm Reading Again

As my eyes are slowly recovering from cataract surgery, I have started reading again using enlarged print and reading glasses. It was frustrating for me not being able to read. The manuscripts were piling up. I can't read for many hours at a time, but I limit myself to an hour a day so that I avoid strain. When strain comes, I stop reading. I first re-read the published book *Seeking New Land* to see if I really liked it and approved of it. John said he is getting many orders for the book. My own opinion was that I liked it and found it accessible despite the freedom in the writing style. Next I read free write sessions which are intended to go into the *Free Write Journal*. I read the short book *May Apples* and found it fresh, light and Krsna-conscious. I then read another writing session, *Upstate: Room to Write*. I found that also suitable for putting in the *Free Write Journal*. Now I'm in the process of reading a long manuscript, *Karttika Moon*. It was written over several different years during *Karttika*. It is composed of three sections: *Karttika Papers*, *Traveling in Karttika*, and *Karttika in Exile*. They each have their own flavors. One was written while living amidst the crowds of devotees at Sridham Mayapur. One was written while living and traveling in the van in Europe. And one was written while residing in a cottage in Ireland. In each case, *Karttika* month was actually observed; we lit candles and sang *Damodarastakam*. I like the book for its variety of styles and reflections.

Krsna-bhajana and his wife Satyasara are finishing the manuscript *Forgetting the Audience*. John Endler has written an introduction to it pointing out the importance of this book in my evolution toward free write expression.

Reading Assignments

I received an email from Aristaha, a devotee in Sweden who asked me to read 100 pages of his poems. (Actually it would come to 200 pages if it's printed extra-large so I can read it in my post-surgery condition). I've already agreed to an assignment of reading Rupa Vilasa's book *The Seventh Gosvami* about Bhaktivinoda Thakura and to write a short book review to go with the book, which is being published by the BBT. I also have to read my own books. Krsna Bhajana's wife Satyasara dasi is typing my vintage book *The Last Days of the Year* for my approval. With all these assignments, it's not possible for me to take on Aristaha's 200 pages of poems, especially at this time when my reading strength is limited.

No Rabbit

This morning Baladeva and I brainstormed but could not come up with a new rabbit. (A "rabbit" is a spontaneous topic that we just "pull out of the hat." It's done before we try excerpts from my books. It's a lively part of the *Journal*.)

Today we couldn't think of anything new for local news. . . . I received no letters because the printer broke down (and I only read them once they are printed). We were printing a big manuscript, *Karttika Moon*, and the printer broke down when it was halfway done. So there are no letters to comment on.

We have written frequently and recently about my cataract condition, and so that's not fresh material. Tomorrow I have a one-week followup examination with the doctor.

I didn't listen to any lectures yesterday because I spent my time reading a free-write session,

May Apples, which is intended to go into the *Free Write Journal*.

So that's how it goes when you go into "the hat." You never know what you will come up with.

Tulasi Devi

Baladeva came upstairs with *tulasi* in a pot and placed it near Radha-Govinda's altar. Every morning, starting at 2:00 A.M. he brings the *tulasi* in and I have continuous *darsana* while I'm chanting my sixteen rounds in front of the picture of Radha-Kalachandji. Then when I'm finished my rounds, I seat Tulasi next to Radha-Govinda. I have an uninterrupted *darsana* of Tulasi-devi all day long. I like to shift my eyes off the forms of Radha-Krsna and see the bushy plant who is so dear to Krsna.

"The most important thing about the spiritual world is that there is no envy among the devotees there. This is true even among the flowers, which are all conscious of the greatness of *tulasi*. In the Vaikuntha world entered by the four Kumaras, even the birds and flowers are conscious of service to the Lord." (*Bhag.* 3.15.19, purport)

We have some healthy *tulasi* plants in the ashram since we keep them under the grow lights and guard them from bugs and water them carefully (not too much or little). *Manjari* buds are growing on our plants, and we pick them and place them at Govinda's feet, and a leaf in Radharani's hand.

In *Caitanya-caritamrta* it is described that Lord Caitanya would have a devotee place a *tulasi* plant in front of Him when He was chanting His rounds. Mahanidhi Swami said it is not possible to practice Vrndavana *bhajana* in the West unless you have a *tulasi* plant. Prabhupada wrote in the *Bhagavatam* that he was very sorry when he had no *tulasi* plant in his beginning

years of preaching in the West. But he wrote in a *Bhagavatam* purport how pleased he was that his disciple Govinda dasi grew *tulasis* from seeds in Hawaii. Now the *tulasis* are growing in all the temples around the world to Prabhupada's satisfaction.

Printer Troubles

The printer on our computer broke down in the midst of producing a 400-page manuscript, *Karttika Moon*. The machine stopped working after 200 pages. So, for days, we were not able to print mail or manuscripts. We called for our friend, Bhakta Amit, to come and help us. He said yes, today was a new-moon day, and that meant it was auspicious for doing *seva* according to the Hindu calendar. Amit went to Staples and bought a new printer and came with it to our ashram. But we could not remember the password to set it up and connect it to a computer. We tried getting in touch with different devotees to find out the password. Some of them were not available. Finally we got in touch with Isvara Govinda, who was the one who originally set up the computer and had the password saved in his collection of files. Then we got the printer to work. We are awaiting the second half of *Karttika Moon* to come in and also some other items from John Endler. The last three printers we had all broke down a month or two after their one-year warranties had run out. This time, we spent extra money and got a better make and model with a four-year replacement warranty. The printing companies count on the customer's misplacing the four-year warranties before they run out, and so the customers can't get their money back. But we have our efficient secretary, Krsna dasi, who keeps all our important papers on file.

These are some of the challenges we face in producing books. One has to be very careful and efficient because it is Krsna's money and books that are at stake. Everything has to be done in an orderly, well-organized fashion, and the equipment has to be first class.

Ravindra Svarupa Lecture

I listened to a lecture by Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu on the First Canto of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He told how Srila Vyasadeva, after compiling the Vedic literatures, was still morose. At this time his spiritual master, Narada Muni, came to him.

Narada Rsi then told his own life story, how he came to Krsna consciousness as a young boy. His mother was a menial maidservant, and he was living with her. During the rainy season she took in some *sadhus*, who stayed there for four months. They enthusiastically talked *krsna-katha*. Ravindra Svarupa said their discussions were a form of *sankirtana*. The boy Narada, who was only five years old, was assisting them. He became enlivened to hear their discussions of Krsna and became attached to the Lord. He sought and attained permission from them to eat the remnants of their *prasadam*, extremely potent sources of *bhakti*.

Narada described himself as self-controlled, not interested in sports, and well-behaved. He became enlivened and purified by his association with the sages. After the four months of the rainy season were over, the sages left.

Later, Narada's mother was bitten by a snake and she died. The young boy was left alone in the world as an orphan. But he was very courageous now. He left home and started for the north, living like a mendicant. He began to experience all varieties of the world—the hills and valleys, the industrial towns, the mines, and the various kinds of people.

After all his experience wandering, Narada sat down and meditated as he had seen the *sadhus* do. He attained the direct *darsana* of Krsna and was overwhelmed in ecstasy, but then the Lord disappeared. Narada tried to regain the same vision of Krsna, but He had disappeared. Then Narada heard a voice from the sky which said, “You will not see me again in this lifetime. One has to be free of all material taint in order to do so.” The Lord did this just to increase Narada's enthusiasm to associate with Krsna. Narada thus became happy and in the next millennium took

up the life of a “spaceman,” traveling all over the universe and making many disciples of the Lord.

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The Wild Garden

p. 214

“POETRY

“Japa

A brown moth goes by.

Eight minutes go by,

sit, sit somewhere else.

I'm on time, mostly.

I think it's going to get better;

it's already subterranean—inside me and coming out, as a prayer

to Radha

and Krsna,

to Radha and Krsna to Radha

and Krsna.”

Every Day, Just Write, Volume 2 : Search for the Authentic Self

p. 235

“December 20

12:30 A.M.

“I want to improve. I'm desperate, or like Thoreau said, living a life of ‘quiet desperation.’ I'm quietly desperate because I don't know by what method I'll make

radical progress during the remainder of my life. I already have an expert guru, perfect scriptures, disciples, Godbrothers, a spiritual movement, a preaching field, and God in my heart. If still I don't cross the ocean of birth and death—I don't know what to say. Where else can I expect help to come from? As I grow older I'm less bold, less capable of making big changes in my way of thinking. Aging makes you complacent and in want of peace and quiet to heal your wounds and nurse your aching body. They say we should grow old gracefully. Does that mean seeking a niche in ISKCON? Is that what it means?"

Passing Places, Eternal Truths

p. 214

“The partridges have strong legs and their tailfeathers are not long. They make loud calamitous noise. When I first saw them I thought maybe they were just-born peacocks who couldn't fly. But they can fly. Two just walked along the brick wall and flew off. By contrast, a pink-necked, gray-backed dove sits on our electric line making dovey sounds. A temple bell rings again for a four o'clock *arati* nearby. Which would you rather have, electricity to run the fans or a quiet Vrndavana with no amplified music?

“By the description of the birds, I am reasserting the simple. Two small sparrows are twitting on the electric line. You find them at Radha-Madana-mohana temple, the first ones to rise in the morning, and you see them at Radha-kunda. You usually don't notice them while you are out worshiping and searching for the Supreme Lord, but sometimes you stop and notice, and there they are with their inconsequential twit-twit and their little doings. They were here before you, and they will be here after you leave.”

The Wild Garden

p. 232

“If we ignore Vrndavana, which is flooded with the nectar of Radha's lotus feet and filled with the bliss of love for Lord Hari's feet, then what are the other things we will talk about?’ (*Vrndavana-mahimamrta, Sataka 4.85*).

“Well said, good friend and great *sadhu*, Prabodhananda Sarasvati. Why talk of other things? Why ever forget Vrndavana? Even these rolling choruses of bird calls and chirping and peacocks’ ‘*kee-kaw*’ are part of Vrndavana. And the trees dripping in the rain. Who can complain about dark morning monsoon clouds in Vrndavana? Not me. But the symptoms of inattentive *japa* mean I have a hard heart filled with unredeemed *aparadhas*. I say I live with it. Others are worse than I am, I say. I look for encouragement in that fact and find it. Then I shake that off and turn to the *sadhu*:

“Srimati Radhika’s forest is the perfect atonement of sins, the ultimate shelter from offenses to great souls, the crest jewel of all principles of religion, and the crest jewel of all goals of life’ (*Vrndavana-mahimamrta, Sataka 4.88*).

“Note: It is Radhika’s forest, and that is what makes it so glorious. Just by living here . . . it doesn't mean you can misbehave here, but you can admit, ‘I am helpless to overcome my bad habits in prayer. I feel no love. Please, I don't like this condition.’

“I sat in the darkness of my room. There was a little light from a high, barred window, but that light was really more of a lighter shade of darkness. It was similar

to my mental conception of a dungeon. From my mat on the floor I chanted, and I heard the *japa* of my two devotee friends in the other part of the house.

“Later, I paced on the rain-soaked roof in the Vrndavana quiet—tenth round, eleventh . . . where was my heart? Where was my feeling for Hare, Krsna, and Rama? I ask why this has to be so.

“I can articulate better in writing, so here, on this page, on behalf of my *japa-sadhana*, I ask the Lord of Vrndavana to please help me. You make all arrangements in Vrndavana. I approach You through Your representatives, Vrnda-devi (who awards desires), Bhakti-devi, and Yogamaya. You have already given us so much mercy on this visit—this house to live in, permission to study and write, time to chant in peace. But if we cannot use it to love You, then what use is it? Please give me a clue as to how to find the essence.

“The fortunate bow down before a person who, always seeing the eternal and sweet spiritual forms of Vrndavana's grass, bushes, and other living entities, and bowing down before them with great devotion, resides here in Vrndavana.’ (*Vrndavana-mahimamrta, Sataka 4.90*)”

The Wild Garden

p. 277

“Prabhupada

“I remember the shock I felt when I heard Prabhupada was going to San Francisco for the first time. We never thought Krsna consciousness would go beyond the Lower East Side. Of course, that wasn't meant to be.

“I still think fondly of Prabhupada's days with us in New York City. I felt like we were living in a small family. We wanted to preach for him, but we had no vision beyond New York.

“In those days I had my job at the welfare department and I also had my own apartment a few blocks from the storefront. My apartment soon became an annex to the storefront. We did everything under his direction—Sundays in Tompkins Square Park, making a record, Sunday Love Feasts—at least a few devotees had joined. He began to teach us *Caitanya-caritamṛta* in the morning, because ‘now you are a little mature.’ We were disappointed to hear that he was going to San Francisco.

“I was among those who thought it wasn't a good idea. I remember discussing it with Raya Rama. How could we let our Swamiji go to San Francisco just because someone had arranged for a ‘mantra rock dance’? Our Swamiji shouldn't be treated like that—it's not respectful. And anyway, *Back to Godhead* magazine is in New York.

“I dared suggest to Prabhupada that he shouldn't go, but I could tell immediately that he wasn't even open to hearing my suggestion. He was determined to preach and to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But he didn't abandon us. He left us with something special: his instructions and the mood of service in separation.

“He wrote us a letter from San Francisco explaining that serving the guru's order was more important than serving his physical presence. I remember feeling excited to carry on in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, even though his room was empty and I felt such an ache of emptiness. We knew we had something even the San Francisco devotees didn't have: service in separation.”

“My Purpose While Traveling

2:55 PM

“Late morning: I found a note on the dashboard of the van for Madhu. It said, ‘Give ‘em hell, Madhu!’ Attached to it was a long harangue attacking the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. Same logic as the one written over ten years ago. They say I have committed an offense by saying that Prabhupada was tired, that he dozed, that he was afraid. They say he had a spiritual body and did not feel human emotions. When he was gored by a cow, I should have said he felt transcendental ecstasy, not that he felt pain.

“I admit I made mistakes in daring to describe Srila Prabhupada's condition, but I consider these mistakes like pockmarks on the moon. Prabhupada, please forgive me. *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* has preached mightily all over the world. Even if they don't reprint it, it has done its job. Still, the attack depressed me.”

Passing Places, Eternal Truths

p. 261

“My Purpose While Traveling

October 4

“On a boat to Liverpool. Did physical exercises while the boat rocked. Oh, hold us up, please. Be quiet, people. Life, go smoothly. But when I meet disciples at Gurudaksina’s house, I may speak on how I don’t order them in an absolute way what to do in terms of vocation or service. *Yat karosi*. Find out what you want to do, and do it for Krsna’s pleasure. *Yat karosi* is not pure *bhakti*, but how else can we come to the stage of pure *bhakti* except by enacting our desires in devotional service? But the desires should be authorized by the spiritual master, and chanting Hare Krsna and

following the four rules is essential. Of course, the guru can't force his disciples to do these things. Impress this on them.

“The boat engine is making a new noise. Slowing down? I can't tell.

“Do you want to write first thoughts? Krsna in the center. Go beyond the body. Chant mantras again and again, one round every eight minutes or so. The Lord is the supreme goal.”

The Wild Garden

“Prabhupada

“Srila Prabhupada, I think I saw your footprints in the sand at Juhu beach. You must have been wearing those canvas shoes this morning when you took your walk. I imagine that you were perspiring. Your strides were long, and we must have been struggling to keep up with you. You wore no *kurta*, so we didn't either. We hoped to overcome any reluctance we might have been feeling in our services. The opportunity to become better disciples is ongoing.

“In my mind, I can hear the prayers your disciples made, silently, fervently, as they walked with you this morning. Please allow us to get close to you. Please call us to serve you. Please help us be sincere, serious, dedicated, honest. Please forgive us for praying without enough sincerity. We are trying to improve.”

The Wild Garden

p. 353-354

“A Mixed Bouquet

“In Vrndavana, gotta minute? Let me whisper in your ear. Life is more complicated here. For every word you write, ten are passed up. Words surround you like taxi-*wallas*: ‘Hare Rama, Hare Krsna! Vrndavana?’

“‘Govinda, Govinda,’ that lady is singing. ‘Govinda, Govinda.’

“Madhava dasa is restless to go out somewhere, but where is the guide to take him? It makes you sad. So many sincere persons trying to understand who is Vrndavana and what is Radha-Krsna.

“You said . . . he said . . . a monkey on the brick wall said . . . parrots screeched in your ear and then flew off. The ‘Hare Krsna, Hare Rama, Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Syama’ ashram has a new loudspeaker, and the International Society for Divine Consciousness has a white, marble dome under construction on Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg.

“He said there’s such a huge *bhagavata-saptaha* underway that no ashram in town has a spare room. The line of beggars grows.

“Leg stump. ‘Govinda’ lady singing the blues. The Hindi lecturer over the PA system is listened to by his immediate audience but also by two hundred and fifty squirrels and two billion ants.

“I just killed an ant unintentionally. By the time I noticed, he was twitching and it was too late. What can I do about it? Absolve it by prayer and preaching? Tell someone they should be nonviolent? If I were kinder, I would see the ant as my brother and take care to remove him. I write it down here. I’m sorry about it and I will try not to do it again.

“At least I can’t understand that Hindi lecturer floating over the airwaves. He’s cutting jokes and making dramatic asides. The birds in the sky don’t care.

“He said, ‘I think there is a bacterium in Vrndavana with my name on it and it's just a matter of time until it catches up to me.’

“That lady *bhajana* singer bending the notes: ‘Radhe-Govinda, Govinda Radhe! Radhe-Govinda, Govinda Rad-he!’ Over and over and over.”

Passing Places, Eternal Truths

p. 341

“My Purpose While Traveling

“ . . . I said that last night's meeting fulfilled the purpose of our travel to Italy, but tonight's meeting was even better. I spoke my old memories of coming to Srila Prabhupada in 1966. I worried beforehand that it would be too much the same old thing and that I wouldn't be able to speak from my heart. But I did. Having to pause for the translator helped. The audience laughed at the humor of the stories. As I told each story—the time I gave 600 dollars and then Prabhupada looked at me as if to say, ‘You haven't surrendered yet,’ the time I didn't get initiated and Swamiji said, ‘If you love me, then I'll love you’—I recreated them and lived in them as I spoke them. Although the devotees may have had fun tonight, I was the one who benefited the most because I was able to feel those happy days again and my simple love for and surrender to Prabhupada. And to be able to joke about my own foolish self and to tell how he dragged me to his lotus feet was relishable.

“Afterwards, someone asked, ‘What is it that brings out the love of the disciple for the spiritual master?’ It is the loving force of the guru pulling the disciple forward.

“I had a bit of a headache at the beginning of the meeting, but I sailed through and the headache left during the ecstasy of talking. Now I'm back on the ground with

less than an hour before I have to take rest. We leave in the morning. This is the reason to travel: to find new audiences and to tell the same old stories of Prabhupada’s saving me and my coming to love him in 1966.”

Daily Compositions

“Two Streams

“We read of Krsna’s coming home at night with the cows which to the demigods looked like the two streams, Ganges and Yamuna flowing to the left and right of Krsna. Krsnadasa Kaviraja says the best pastimes have playful jokes in them. But jokes that don’t please Krsna are not funny.

“Lit candles.

“You can be happy in Krsna consciousness in the empty house. You can hope no bad thing will happen. Krsna will protect you. The rurals will not invade. You’ll be able to fall asleep under the blanket. Teeth happy in the cup of water. The heart sailing slowly enough in the chest He gave you. We wanted something like this.

“The night . . . is coming quickly. The joke or serious play that is not pleasing to Krsna has no worth. We have the duty, don’t we? We especially are expected . . . to carry it out.

“Krsna science will save us, I hope. It can as long you hold on through the worst things that start happening. Krsna won’t abandon you as long as you don’t abandon Him.” (EJW 35: *Karttika Flame and Shadow*)



6 3

I've got the photos ready to travel,
3 x 5 color prints.

The one on top shows me holding
a red, tassled umbrella over you
in the blue sky of Mayapur morning.

It looks like the rain has stopped.

Ravindra-svarapa is carrying a small video camera.

Jayapataka Swami is looking out to lands
you might want him to buy.

I can tell this picture is 1974

because of your bamboo walking cane.

I'm concentrating to hold the umbrella
steady and just right over your head.

I'm wearing a Prabhupada T-shirt
which I usually don't wear.

You are striding, quickly,

your mouth turned down,
 not speaking to us.
 We all gather around you
 because you are a pure devotee of Krsna.
 You have brought us to Lord Caitanya's land.

Daily Compositions

“Calling Out to Prabhupada

“O Prabhupada, who gave us books to learn the science of Krsna and who directed us into the secrets of realization. O Prabhupada, who taught us by example to always work for Krsna, and who expected us to work as hard. Master, I am tired, I cannot do as you did or I did when you were here with us. But I want to serve you still, master, and that is your blessing on me.

“Prabhupada, you are still leading the charge in your temples and in the hearts of all your devotees. Devotees come to you by reading your books and hearing and seeing the devotion in your older disciples. But all can become your disciples. I am one of them. Do you see us meeting and quarreling? But you may also see good signs. You said as long as the holy names are being sung...

“ . . . You are the Lord and master of the devotees. I write my official sentence. I’m a strayed soul. But even in my position I want to be with you, and I will (if you’ll allow) massage and bathe you today.

“I will read your book. I already did read the book and heard you speak in Vrndavana in 1972 (one should live in Vrndavana, but if one is unable to physically live there, he should live there mentally).

“ . . . Be afraid. Be concerned. Distribute books. Adopt a persona from a crouch. Don’t sit on a couch when you chant *japa*. Be a happy guy only if you’re allowed. All these and elusive things I also mean to offer to him and followers who seek real ways.

“Prabhupada is with us. But he’s his own person and spiritual master. Don’t mess around. You’re a *cela*. But you’ve come down. You are someone of your own devices and means. “I’m a guy who’s got to dance (free-write).” I have to break loose and find Krsna consciousness in the core of understanding.” (*EJW 35: Karttika Flame and Shadow*)

Remembering Srila Prabhupada: A Free-Verse Rendition of the Life and Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

“COLLEGE DAYS”

“Why should a *nitya-siddha* go to school?

Why not?

Must he walk without touching the ground?

‘By the order of the Supreme

he remains within the material world

like an ordinary man, but his only business

is to broadcast the glories of the Lord.’

Throughout his life he sometimes told
 how at Scottish Church College
 he learned worldly knowledge:
 Shakespeare. Dickens, economist Marshall,
 psychology, chemistry. history.
 It neither baffled nor appealed to his soul.
 Though the college was Christian,
 he remained pure Vaisnava.
 They gave him a new Bible and collegiate academics.
 ‘What are you thinking?’ asked a friend.
 ‘I don't like these things,’ Abhay replied.
 When a professor disparaged
 transmigration of the soul—
 ‘How could a person be judged without a witness?’—
 Abhay rejected the flimsy logic:
 This is their Christian philosophy?
 Don't they know there is a witness?
 Don't they know the Lord is in the heart?
 As a lily on water remains dry,
 you remained unaffected.
 “. . . . Traveling alone to Puri
 to see Lord Jagannath,
 reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* —he had no other plans.
 Yet just to live in Calcutta was the greatest preparation:
 his eternal spiritual master

was waiting there,
and the time drew near
for them to meet.

“Krsna took over
after Gour Mohan De
had brought him as far as he could.
Marriage and a job
at Dr. Bose's lab—a *grhastha's* way.
Minimizing but retaining worldly duties,
he focused on Krsna as Supreme.
But when Krsna took over,
Abhay was ready.
He remained uncaught
by the national passion,
surging like a tide
behind the figure of Gandhi.
Abhay wore protestor's *khadi*,
but his heart was not in it.
And Krsna took over.”

Dear Sky: Letters from a Sannyasi

“*March 9, Santa Domingo*

“Dear secret self,

“Reading about a scene that takes place just before sunrise. The birds, the roosters, and all of Vrndadevi's creatures are trying to wake Radha and Krsna so They can go home before Their parents find Them missing. The dawn is beautifully compared to a girl in a crimson sari with *kumkum* on her face.

“Even here in mundane Santa Domingo it's the same earth planet; it's the same sun starting to redden on the eastern horizon. And there's also a rooster crowing, although I know he's not directly inspired by Vrndadevi.

“ . . . Quickly the sky lightens. Radha and Krsna linger in Their pastimes, not listening to the warnings of the birds that they should go home at once. Finally Vrndadevi signals to the old monkey in the tree. She screeches, ‘J-a-t-i-l-a! Jatila is coming!’ Radha and Krsna and the *gopis* become frightened and run home. That scene of Them running together hand in hand into Vraja village, and, at a certain point, breaking apart—one going to Nandagram, one to Yavat—is wonderful.

“Perhaps a little *sutra* form of that Vrndavana dawn can be kept in our hearts. Then when we see the early morning sky, we can remember that there is something special and hidden from everyone's eyes and thoughts which is the actual meaning of dawn. At least we have heard it, so we will not see dawn in the same way again. We don't see dawn as the time when the school bus driver gets in his bus and drives to his post. We don't see dawn as the stale leftovers of sense gratifiers spewing out of the clubs after a night of sinful activity. We don't see dawn as the time when a line of headlights moves down the highway toward another day's work.

“This is our secret, and we hanker to return to Vrndavana in India to draw closer to this wonderful thing that is hidden from us. We want to walk out to the grove and chant Hare Krsna as the sky lightens. There, the songs and activities of

the birds reflect the pastimes of Radha and Krsna. All creatures come forth to wake the Lord.”

My Dear Lord Krsna: A Book of Prayers

“When I write to You, I should ask for service. "All I want in my life is Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth." I know what You want me to do. You want me to contribute to Lord Caitanya's sankirtana movement—‘Tell everyone you meet about Krsna. Chant Hare Krsna.’ I have done it for many years. I still do it, mostly by writing.

“And aside from making propaganda, I try to write to You personally, to get to know You. Of course, You will reveal Yourself to me by Your own sweet will, as You desire. If I act for You, You will be pleased with me and reveal Yourself in my heart. I contend that writing itself is an action to approach You when I make a sincere, well-composed prayer, which is an act of devotion recognized by You. A prayer expresses Your glories, describes Your beauties, and praises Your devotees.

“I cite Your glories by describing You as the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Person, the cause of all causes. From Your original form emanates all the expansions of Godhead, all the individual spirit souls, and all the energies and manifestations of the material and spiritual worlds. Everything comes from You and is maintained by You.

“I am not qualified to make wonderful prayers (uttama sloka) because I do not know Your universal glories, I have not perceived Your personal beauty, and I do not render devotional service to Your devotees. My prayers are poor, broken offerings, made out of a personal need to express myself to You. I am a ‘wannabe’

devotee. My desire to know You is ‘self-ish,’ not broadminded. It is vertical (from me to You), not horizontal (from You to me—to others).

“As I write this impromptu prayer to You, I am getting a headache and my thinking process is becoming disturbed. I want to close it out by saying something in favor of my writing to You, feeble as it may be. The fact that I write to You means I want to reach You and to behold You. And if You want me to serve You, then I want to serve You. I am not a warrior. I am not a poet. I am not a scholar. Am I a devotee? That You will judge. You will ask my spiritual master, and he will tell You. If I am to make it as a devotee, writing to You will have to be included. It is a virtue, of a kind. I pray to You that my writing and my other services may improve. Let my heart broaden to include love of others. Let my writing become a true prayer by a true devotee. This I ask You, even as I am forced to end this prayer.”

Progresso: A Ten Day Book Seeking Krsna Consciousness

“The Jaladuta has been turned into scrap metal. Srila Prabhupada has gone back to Godhead. His Chippiwada rooms are collecting dust. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is preserved with his translations and Bhaktivedanta purports.

“And the memory of walking with him is preserved in these photos. I grab at them nowadays, and keep them in albums to carry with me.

“Murray, Steve, you missed the boat. I still remember you though. I'm no Narada, but may you be blessed. I clung to Srila Prabhupada and gave up our association because you were confirmed atheists. I couldn't be soft on that. But may you be blessed to one day chant Hare Krsna. I walked with Prabhupada. I'm no Narada, but I walked with Prabhupada. (I have the photos here to prove it.)”

Why Not Fiction?

“We went out for a walk this morning: Jaya Govinda, Madhumangala, and me. We didn't see another human being for the thirty-five minutes we were out. We did hear owls hooting. We are high up on a mountain in the village of Erice. There is a lot of old stone architecture, a church built for the monks of St. John the Baptist from the 14th century (its dome reminds me of the Ulysses S. Grant memorial in New York City), and a tall, formidable castle built in the 12th century. I tried to imagine soldiers crawling up its sides and being thrown down from above. We walked to a park. We saw a nervous cat on top of a dumpster, but no other beings except pine and other trees. We were so high up the mountain that looking down reminded me of being in an airplane. We could see the lights in the valley below, the coast, a promontory rock, the ocean. The sky was bathed in a gray-blue dawn light and only slowly changed in the time we were out.

“We didn't exchange any words although we noticed words written on signs: ‘La Ciclopes’ (a restaurant), ‘La Pineta.’ We chanted and chanted the holy names: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

“And I thought about my own way of seeing. How do we gain access to that? Does it make a good enough story? Is it the truest story or just the same old thing? I answered that for myself. It's not the same old thing. It's new and fresh and changing. We have to see it clearly and stand up for it, our own little life, our life attached to Krsna. We who have nothing to do with this town, we have to see things in our own Krsna conscious way as we walk through it.”

Progresso: A Ten-Day Book Seeking Krsna Consciousness

“May Lord Krsna See A Sincerity In Me

“August 10

“The defense never rests. Sometimes ‘a good offense is the best defense,’ and you mount a frontal attack. . . . The messages of Godhead are powerful antidotes to the atheistic charges made by *mudhas* in the age of Kali. Those who seek relief from the vices of this age will take shelter in this *Bhagavata Purana*. What I write is not *Purana*, but I can still give the *bhagavata* on this page. I’m an authorized receiver and distributor of the philosophy of *bhakti*.

“I decided not to use the prayers spoken by the priests of King Nabhi in my lecture because there was no possible way I could cover all the points in an hour. The priests prayed to Lord Visnu to please help them remember Him:

‘Dear Lord, we may not be able to remember Your name, form and qualities due to stumbling, hunger, falling down, yawning or being in a miserable diseased condition at the time of death when there is a high fever.’

“(One might add, ‘We also forget You even while we serve You on the guru’s order, or even while our tongue utters Your holy name.’)

“We therefore pray unto You, O Lord, for You are very affectionate to Your devotees. Please help us remember You and utter Your holy names, attributes and activities, which can dispel all the reactions of our sinful lives.’ (*Bhag.* 5.3.12)

“Too many points. My audience might not be able to handle them all at once. All right, then I’ll speak on Srila Prabhupada.”

Writing Sessions

My Purpose at Isola di Albarella (continued)

“November 11th, 1996 (continued)

“4:15 P.M.

“I was starting to feel tired in the head, so came to write in back. Madhu cruising alone. At one point he started to slow down and then stopped completely. I heard him talking with someone up front saying he was from Ireland. The next thing I knew he was opening the back door. As the door opened with me sitting there, I faced no less than six *Douane* agents of France, each in a blue uniform wearing a pistol. The leader was a woman. She was young and wearing purple mascara around her eyes. She was also the most aggressive and suspicious. They asked their questions such as, the value of the books that were strapped in. Madhu said they were invaluable spiritually. She looked at them more closely muttering to herself sarcastically, and humored also that they were invaluable spiritually. She and a male agent got in the front and really started nosing around. They unstrapped cartons and got into one thing after another. They asked Madhu what his harmonium was. Madhu said it’s an instrument of music. They even looked at the computer. I sat in the back too tired to get upset about it all. Finally, she came back into my room with her long blown-out hair and no hat. She asked me to turn a light on. I said, ‘Je ne parle pas Français,’ but turned on the light. She opened two bins, one that contained medicine, but didn’t look at them. She opened the bin under Prabhupada and saw his night *cadars*. She tugged at the shelf behind which Prabhupada is tied in. I open it for her and said, ‘Statue.’ She said nothing, but terminated her investigation there.

“It took five minutes to readjust the van after they finished their investigation. Sorry folks, no drugs. Just two genuine monks on their way back from Italy to Ireland.

“I forgot to tell – we got across the border very easily, they didn’t even check us, neither the Italians nor the French. But as we went to enter Mt. Blanc the young attendant charged us not as a camper but as a truck. He did this because he wasn’t sure and consulted with his superior. When Madhu heard this, he became angry. He began saying loudly in Italian, ‘Look! Look inside, it’s a camper!’ Now three men were paying attention to him. He got red in the face and angry. He got out of the van and confronted them. He demanded that they open the back door and look. All they had done was measure the van with a measuring tape. They said (Madhu told me later), that it could not be a camper unless it was solely used for living in. Madhu said that if you just look inside, you’ll see that’s all it’s used for. Finally, they conceded to take a look. He opened the back door. They guy said, ‘Where’s the toilet?’ Madhu showed him. It was pretty obvious that it was only a camper. They had nothing left to do but argue with each other and let us enter the tunnel at the rate for a camper. It’s not a small difference but a considerable amount of money between a camper and a commercial truck.

“I said to Madhu as we pulled out, ‘I would have asked you to please cool down, but I saw that you were only making-believe.’

“Madhu said, no, he wasn’t making-believe.

“Here at the mobile market, people are curious about his Hare Krsna dress as he goes in and now comes out.

“Petrol stop. Don’t shake. Breathe in and out. He says we’ll stop by 6 P.M. I was praying when the *Douane* officer went through the kitchen stock. Not praying that she wouldn’t find anything suspicious or contraband, just praying, folded palms. Wished I could pray to my God. My desk is so small (I like it) it suddenly reminded me of a confessional booth. I thought of saying to her, ‘You shouldn’t search us.’ (We are men of God.)

“Mobil Gas is giving out free air and water, very good. Saw a thing waterfall in the Alps – dropping a long distance. Seven percent grade down to the valley, trucks be careful. Mobil market lit up in all blue except for the ‘O’ in Mobil which is red.

“Krsna Krsna, the name of God is the only thing that can save us in this age.

“Off and on, Madhu and I talk about the search by the Customs. He said they were young Customs agents but two older superiors were standing by watching. Yes, I remember seeing a gray-bearded man. The young ones were being enthusiastic to impress their bosses. One of the superiors said to his friend, “They are Hare Krsna’s.” In Italy this would have been in our favor, but in France Hare Krsna is seen as a bad cult. That may be another reason why they persisted in searching.

“About 5 o’clock I started telling Madhu the Krsna pastimes I wasn’t able to read last night. I had been able to read up to the end of the ceremony of Govardhana Puja performed by Krsna. I narrated what I could remember of Indra sending the rains and Krsna holding up the hill, the chapter, ‘Wonderful Krsna,’ and the chapter of Indra offering prayers to Krsna. By then it was almost 5:30, and Madhu was already turning off the highway to a place to stop for the night in the midst of a gas

station and restaurant complex.

November 12, 1996

“1:30 A.M.

“Narada taught the Haryasvas through analogies. They understood each one. In each case the conclusion was, “What is the use of wasting one’s time in material activities?” One example was a swan who distinguishes and takes the essence of life – spiritual knowledge. Another example was a machine made of razors, comparable to Time which cuts through all life’s durations. “One should be extremely careful to utilize the span of his life for spiritual realization or Krsna consciousness.” (*Bhag.* 6.5.19, purport)

“Read this just now. Soon, I’ll start *japa*. Overnight it rained on our roof, pleasant sound, while we sleep dry in sleeping bags in the van. It’s cool but not intolerable. When the rain stopped for awhile it became noisier; only then did I put in my earplugs. Dreamt that mercy delivered strange persons in the city. All received the mercy of *hari-nama* and became devotees. But it only happened by a miracle of the Lord. I woke thinking that I could not perform frontline preaching of any sort in the cities. Administering to crazy, wounded people. But even those who preach there don’t cause the final transformation of the *jiva* from mad to sane. It was done (in my dream) by a direct act of God. I thought perhaps I may pray deliberately in my solitude for the deliverance of souls. And act for it in what ways I can – counseling those who have already come to Krsna’s shelter, writing books that may reach out to others.

“Big noses on the men I doodle. Often, they run or walk to the left and off the page. Where are they going? To that *pada-yatra*?”

“We should reach Manu’s house Wednesday evening. The day after that is Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance day. If I am clear of headaches, I propose to go to the temple that morning, join with the devotees and speak something. Say... ‘The disappearance of the Lord or the great devotee is not often discussed, too painful. We discuss the pure devotee’s appearance or disappearance as the same. There is pain in Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance: 1) because we remember the actual events of that time in 1977; 2) since then we suffer the loss of his presence in ISKCON; and 3) we serve now in separation. These are not items of material lamentation if we understand them rightly. Especially serving him in separation is a transcendental richness. It is as good as being with him or even better – we yearn for and anticipate joining him. But it must be kept active.’ Speak on this rather than recount his activities which you did on his *Vyasa-puja* day this year.

“4:00 A.M.

“Madhu surprised me by asking if I could get ready right away to leave. I thought we were leaving at 5 A.M. But it creates a bubbly happiness to get going as early as possible. The very best road time is now even though there’ll certainly be trucks on *La Bonne Route*. Under Krsna’s shelter we can speed up north heading towards *Le Shuttle*. I’ve just shaved so I’ll look respectable for the French and English officials who will stop us at the shuttle and maybe before that.

“6:10 A.M.

“I spent about two hours in the front cab with Madhu – chanting rounds and talking some. We talked about the different possibilities of where he would go to get his operation and how I would manage at Manu’s house without him. We didn’t talk about my own activities at Manu’s except in an outer sense. I said that I would want to give two lectures a week. But what would I do in my room? In my mind, I’m not opening myself up to talk about that. I want to find my own way in it. I’ve been asking myself the question, ‘What will I write for a month and a half?’ First, let me ask, ‘What will I do?’ Then, ‘Will what I write come naturally?’

“For now, it’s heavy winds and rain, black highway with a white stripe, passing the long streams of trucks. We’re scheduled to stop soon for a quick and light breakfast, juice and ‘biscuits’ then speed on toward *Le Shuttle*.

“8:00 A.M., *Shell Stop*

“Rain stopped. Sky gray pearl. M. serves himself. Same scene inside – woman with a red jacket at the cash register looking out. *Boutique* customers. ‘Champagne’ bottles along the wall. What are you going to do for the next month? What about your life’s short remainder? Today – will you get or survive a headache? Gas nozzles and clanks against the van.

“The door to the restaurant boutique is electric. Four young guys walk up to it and the first two doors open and the second two doors open. Keeps the heat inside. It’s mostly a glass house. Some of things they have inside are ‘détente television,’ whatever that is. Of course, there are toilets, nursery, sauna, ‘Espace Communication.’ As well as games, ‘Laverie’ and magazines and newspapers. All of this to make life happy along *La Bonne Route* as you briefly stop, pay out and move on. While spending a little money here you might also win something – three nights

in a hotel, you can accumulate points for gasoline, and so on, and so forth. The electric doors open and out comes a well-dressed guy whom I noticed going inside. On the way in he took off his suit jacket and put it in the back. He's got a cigarette, a cup, a tie, and a bluish shirt like the sky. Here comes Madhu out the door in his sweatshirt and pants. Off we go.

“Twice I saw small hawks standing on top of the highway fence posts looking in towards the expansive fields.

“As the traffic picks up with late morning, it's too much for me to watch up front. I retire to the back where I sit up and face the wall with the picture of the cows at Govardhana.”