

## ***Free Write Journal #134***

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### **Free Writes**

#### **Going to the Forest**

I know a devotee who left his marriage because it had become unbearable and impossible to practice Krsna consciousness there. His wife committed adultery. She started drinking wine, eating fish and eggs and occasionally smoking marijuana. She also led the children away from a strict practice of Krsna consciousness. For his own spiritual survival, the man followed the scriptural directions that one in his position should “go to the forest” and leave that inimical situation of nondevotee family life. Going to the forest doesn’t mean just living in the woods. It means going to a holy place where there is association of devotees. The best places for forest-going are the holy *dhamas* of Vrndavana and Mayapur in India. One should not roam around in the precincts of the *dhama* and seek out Mayavadi “gurus” or associate with *apa-sampradayas*. Prabhupada has advised his followers not to intimately associate with the *brijbasis* because they are on a different level than we are. In the *dhamas* one should chant and hear and also take up tangible service so that one is always thinking of Krsna and following Prabhupada’s mission. Stay safe and preach at our temple, where thousands of people come on pilgrimage every day. Under such inhospitable conditions at home it is not wrong to leave such so-called family and go live in the *dhama*.

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I have received several letters from disciples over the years who are lamenting painful

divorces. I tell the devotees that lamentation is toxic, and they should try to be detached from material misery and seriously practice Krsna consciousness. Prabhupada often pointed out that this was so, that we should see the material world as a place of misery and turn our attention to becoming a pure devotee. Often the parents are bereft when there is a split-up of possession of the children. They should think that they have done the best to give the child an opportunity to practice Krsna consciousness. If the other partner is less inclined to Krsna consciousness, the more-inclined devotee should see it that they have done their best to raise the child with spiritual values, and now it's up to his karma and Krsna's mercy how he develops. If one becomes a pure devotee, he or she can liberate whole generations of relatives, what to speak of one. So becoming a pure devotee is the main focus. It will bring solace to the one lamenting and purify the members of the family.

In our out-loud reading, we are hearing an ideal example. Maharaja Pariksit was cursed to die in seven days. He took it as a signal from Krsna and completely renounced his worldwide kingdom, family members, youth, and all connection with the world. He spent his last remaining days in the best possible way: hearing the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* from Sukadeva Gosvami. A devotee cannot renounce all his material responsibilities because he has to work to pay his family dues. But the devotee can constantly hear the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and imbibe the relevant instructions that fill the pages of the *Bhagavatam*. And he should chant his *japa* with deep, steady attention, asking Krsna how he can serve Him best at this time.

## **Bhurijana's Overview**

I'm listening to recordings of Bhurijana giving overview classes of verses from the Fourth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*. He reads from Prabhupada's purports and expands on them from his own reading and improvisation. Krsna descends to the earth in His *sac-cid-ananda* form. He never takes on a material body. As to why He comes, it's to annihilate the miscreants as well as to

protect and mitigate the feelings of separation of His pure devotees.

“Bhurijana’s lectures are collected on ISKCON Desire Tree, which is broadcast from Chowpatty, Mumbai. Bhurijana lectures on Gita chapters 1-9, and then other VIHE devotees lecture from chapters 10-18. Bhurijana is a very good teacher. He developed his style going back to the days when he was *gurukula* teacher in Gita Nagari, and then later transferred with the school to Vrndavana, where he has lived for many years. He is deep in the mood of Vraja and loves to take photographs of the *dham*. He’s been giving lectures about Vrndavana every year with his wife Jagattarini, and with Sacinandana Maharaja. Many people have come to attend the Govardhana Retreats, and they have a worldwide following through recordings of the seminars. Vrndavana is a very special place to preach. I have given seminars there over the years, and they are available through the VIHE website. When I went there to teach, I got the valuable association of Bhurijana and relished it very much. He introduced me to the confidential places of the *dham*.

### **Bhurijana's Lecture on *Bhagavad-gita***

The lecture was complicated for me. He spoke of different levels of surrender to Krsna. Some people surrender to Krsna but want something in return. Then there are different degrees of a surrender which still has something conditional about it. But when you surrender to Krsna just for His pleasure, that is pure *bhakti*. Rupa Gosvami states this stage at the beginning of *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu: Anyabilasita sunyam jnana-karmady-anavrtam/ anukulyena krsnanusilanam bhaktir uttama*. (Brs. 1.1.11) That is pure *bhakti*—surrendering to Krsna with no motive except to please Him in spontaneous love.

### **Devotees in Prison**

I received a letter from an uninitiated devotee in Florida. He has had association with devotees. He has read my books and knows different devotees in the Northeast. He says that when

he gets out of prison in 2022, he plans to come visit me and Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu, who lives across the street. My disciple Upendra serves in the ISKCON Prison Ministry and receives many letters like this. He corresponds with the inmates and tries to get them Prabhupada's books.

We conditioned souls are all in prison as we identify with our material bodies. To the degree that we're conditioned, we'll have to come back for future births in the material world. If we go on committing sins or just adding to the karma, we'll have to face this life after life.

When the *mahabhagavata* devotee Haridasa Thakura was put into prison, the prisoners expected enlightening talks. They were confused when he told them they were in a good situation for spiritual life. He said they were free from activities of sense gratification, and they could spend their time chanting and reading Krsna conscious books. At first they were discouraged by his words, but as he explained it further they became realized and happy with his conclusions.

## **Zoom Call**

I spoke on Zoom with Krsna Bhajana and his wife Satyasara, who are trapped in lockdown in Wales, UK. They are enthusiastic to type, edit and help the others (such as John Endler and Lal Krishna) in producing my books. They are waiting for the COVID epidemic to ease up so they can return to their home in Alachua, Florida. In Wales they have little devotee association, but they do shared out-loud readings with devotees on conference calls. I mentioned to them books I was interested in printing, *Last Days of the Year* and *Forgetting the Audience*. As I spoke, he wrote the titles down. He is in close contact with John Endler and Lal Krishna as a team to publish my books. They are enthusiastic to print low-run editions of my free write sessions, to be available on Amazon. These couples could still become grandparents, but they're putting aside such family duties to do service that is more enlivening to them, the production of my books. Krsna Bhajana and Satyasara have been reading my books all along, and now they're serving to produce new titles. They're inspired and willing to make this a lifetime commitment. I am happy to see disciples

in their golden years willing to compile, publish and distribute my books.

## **Baladeva’s Zoom Talk**

Baladeva Vidyabhusana has been asked to give an hour and a half talk on the formation of *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* to the Boston temple. They have done some favors for us, so we want to reciprocate. Baladeva is well-qualified to do this. He traveled all around the world with a tape recorder chained to his body, gaining interviews from people who said they knew Prabhupada. He sorted out the persons who seemed authentic from the persons who seemed to be speaking inauthentically, and he sent the material back to our typists. I read the manuscripts and used some of them in writing my narrative. Baladeva’s talk will be very colorful and interesting about the sometimes wild adventures he had in tracking down witnesses of Srila Prabhupada.

## **Sukadeva Gosvami's First Answer**

Maharaja Pariksit first inquired from Sukadeva Gosvami, “What is the duty of a human being, especially one who is about to die?” Sukadeva Gosvami gave the answers in two compact verses:

“O King, it is therefore essential that every human being hear about, glorify and remember the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, always and everywhere. Those who drink through aural reception, fully filled with the nectarean message of Krsna, the beloved of the devotees, purify the polluted aim of life known as material enjoyment, and thus go back to Godhead, to the lotus feet of Him [the Personality of Godhead]. (*Bhag.* 2.2.36-37)

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### 2.) Autobiography

*The Story of My Life*. I wrote three volumes under this title. I used the method that Mark Twain said he was inspired to write in his autobiography. He said he just started in anywhere in his life where he was inspired to write. He would write as long as he was inspired and then pause and take up later when another inspiration arrived. He said he also used the autobiography as a diary.

I wrote my first volume alternating chapters of my association with Srila Prabhupada with chapters of my life before I became a devotee. After three volumes I decided that my autobiographical title sounded egotistical, especially if I were to continue it for more books. So I changed my title to *Looking Back*. Under *Looking*

*Back*, I included compilations of books I had written before. I published *Resting at Mendocino*. This was written in California during a time when I was suffering intense chronic migraines. My medical advisers and caretakers forbade me from doing any writing and said I should just rest. But I disobeyed them, and even during this time of frequent debilitating pain, I wrote my book. I also compiled a paraphrase of my already published—and banned—*Sanatorium*. I revised the book and took out the objectionable, sexually explicit passage. I stopped the autobiographical at two volumes of *Looking Back*.

### **3.) Fire Truck**

My father was a fireman (and later a lieutenant, and later a captain, and then a battalion captain). When he was a fireman, he was stationed in our town in Staten Island. He drove the long hook-and-ladder truck with a man steering the back part of the truck in addition to my father steering the front part. I saw him one day responding to a fire. The bells and siren were ringing, and he was steering the big vehicle through the commercial village. He had big, strong arms, and I was so proud to see him maneuvering the truck. I also visited a firehouse, slid down the fire pole and saw a “nudie” picture of a woman taped to one of the firemen’s inside locker door.

The firemen were very kind to me on my visit at the firehouse, but they used rough language which my mother would have been shocked to hear.

### **4.) False Alarm by Steve Voight**

Steve Voight declared himself an enemy of mine. He used to threaten me and my close friends in various ways. Once he called me on the telephone and then shot

off a pistol. Another time he called in a false alarm with the address of my house. The police were very angry when they came. They hated false alarms, which they said were so dangerous. We told them that we hadn't pulled the alarm but that I had a declared enemy who played tricks on me, and we gave them his name.

### **5.) Protected by Krsna**

I was once badly injured when the broken plate-glass window of our Boston temple storefront fell down on my head and arm. We had locked up the temple and went down to New York to see Swamiji at 26 Second Avenue. While we were there, Prabhupada called Jadurani and I up into his room and asked us to be married. We both protested, but he was adamant. We got married in a civil ceremony in Manhattan and then returned to Boston. When I arrived there, I saw that the big plate-glass window of our storefront had been broken by a rock thrown undoubtedly by one of the teenage hoodlums who used to harass us. So the plate-glass window was dangling in place, and I tried to remove it. As I did so, a big upper piece of it loosened and came crashing down on top of me. It hit my forearm and forehead. I was bleeding profusely, with pieces of glass all over my body. I called Jadurani and asked her to call an ambulance. An ambulance soon came. I was lying down on the floor of the storefront when he arrived. At first sight of me, he cried out, "Jesus Christ!" They took me to the emergency room and said it was lucky it didn't hit my eyes. They picked out the glass pieces and gave me sixteen stitches in my arm and about ten stitches in my forehead. Then they discharged me and told me to rest. It was a very scary incident. I wrote to Prabhupada about it, and he sympathized in a return letter. When the doctor was stitching me up, I took the opportunity to preach to him about Krsna consciousness. I had been a devotee for two years, and I was

enthusiastic to talk to anyone I met about Krsna, as Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya advised. The medical people were surprised and pleased to hear me witnessing to them about Krsna consciousness. The day after the accident I went back to work at the welfare office in Cambridge, Mass. The head boss of the office called me to speak to him. He advised me to quit the Hare Krsna cult because it was the object of threat and attack from various people. I told him no, I couldn't do that. It was my religion and I had to stick to it. Later in the day I felt faint and dizzy in the head, and I took the rest of the day off.

### **6.) *Madhurya-rasa***

I occasionally receive poems from devotees about *madhurya-rasa*. But it is advised that one should not do this unless one is liberated. Prabhupada told an analogy that once there was a cow in a barn, and a fire came there. She was so traumatized that now whenever she sees the color red, she panics: "There is the fire." We are so "traumatized" by sexual desires that when we see a depiction of *madhurya-rasa* we tend to think of the mundane love affairs between boys and girls. So it is risky business.

## **Krishnafest**

My disciple Sankarsana dasa is a veteran of the Krishnafest program, which Gunagrahi Maharaja began in the 1980s. That was a golden period for *sankirtana* at the Washington, D.C. Malls. They had fifteen people going out daily and holding an attractive *kirtana*, which drew groups of young people. They would involve them in dance contests and get them to chant Hare Krsna. Since Krishnafest's presence has broken up, Sankarsana goes out to the Mall by himself during spring and summer, occasionally joined by another devotee. He plays an electric keyboard

and chants by the hour. His latest innovation is singing accompanied by popular tunes. He saw this being done in Los Angeles ISKCON by devotees who received positive reactions from the general public, and was much attracted to it. When he goes on the Mall, he tries to have a book table. Unfortunately, he doesn't have an extra man to go out with, and he has to interrupt his singing to tend to the books. Sankarsana is a steady visitor to Viraha Bhavan. He's been coming for years and does cooking and cleaning duties, specializing in pizza the way Gunagrahi Maharaja taught him—very nice. At the Potomac temple, he cooks and does *pujari* service along with his wife, who is the head *pujari* of the temple. And during the summer season he follows the Ratha-Yatra festivals and has a large display of Indian paraphernalia, including clothing, which is his honest way of making a living. Sankarsana is always seen wearing earphones and listening to Krsna conscious lectures by Prabhupada and his disciples. He is basically an ideal *grhastha*.

### **Krsna Dasi's Vaccine Shot**

We are glad that Krsna dasi got her first vaccine shot against COVID-19. There are so many unknown factors, but something is better than nothing. Now our whole ashram, with the exception of Bala, who is away in Trinidad, is protected with vaccine inoculations. With medical remedies, there's always unknowns, but you try the best you can, researching and deciding what is best. For decades I suffered from chronic migraine headaches. Many people witnessed to me a remedy that worked for them one regimen or another. None of them worked for me, except eventually I was properly diagnosed and the migraines subsided with allopathic treatment. There is a phenomenon in the U.S.A. called "vaccine envy." The envious ones still have to wait before they get their shot. But the authorities assure us that by the end of the year the vaccine will be available to anyone who wants it.

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***Every Day, Just Write, Volume 1:***

***Welcome Home to the One Big Book of Your Life***

pp. 60-61

***4:20 P.M., Temple Room***

“Radha-Govinda: dressed in red and white with designs in silver *jari*. Radha’s blouse has a high neck, and Her flouncy skirt is covered by a pinafore. *Tulasi* leaf on Her palm, blessing us. Laksmi-Narayana worship they say, but They are Radha and Govinda.

“Krsna has a buffalo horn that curves in the same direction as His hip, where it rests. His garland extends to His ankles; Hers is shorter.

“Radha-Krsna worship is topmost, but we can’t jump to it artificially. Gaurakisora dasa Babaji says we need to first practice austerity, give up all sense gratification, and practice *bhajana* for a long time before we will find ourselves free enough of lust and able to hear of Their pastimes. What to speak of serving Them directly—or Their *sakhis*—in our own spiritual form.

“Island paths, beautiful copper tones, leaves piled, clear air, calm and cold—the paths are darkening.

“A prayer before I leave: Dear Lords, if You like, please keep me active reading Srila Prabhupada’s books and writing. Give me insight how to better serve You. O *hari-nama*, please let me pay attention and pray the Hare Krsna mantra.

“I want to absorb Your beauty. You are the center of Inis Rath. Everything here is Yours and is done for Your pleasure. Even this writing done across the lake at Manu’s house is for You. When I look at the lake and the island, the trees, please let me be aware that You are the jewel in this setting and the life of the devotees.”

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## ***Every Day, Just Write, Volume 1:***

### ***Welcome Home to the One Big Book of Your Life***

pp. 10-11

“Two things that came out yesterday while reading *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*:

1.) It’s not true, as some harsh critics say, that the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* treats Prabhupada offensively as an ordinary human being. I consistently portray Prabhupada as a liberated soul, but as one who manifested human traits to us. There is a good section on this in SPL where Prabhupada's last months are described. I say that his ‘dying’ was obviously a transcendental experience, yet he taught us ordinary persons by example how we may approach death. I felt reassured against the critics by hearing yesterday’s readings.

2.) *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* is an official biography of Prabhupada’s life, and in that sense, it is not my most honest expression of how I feel about him. An example of this was when I described that the dealings with Prabhupada in his very last days were the most intimate that he allowed us in his life. I said that the only thing that could compare to it was Prabhupada’s association with his first disciples in 1966, but that those who were present then and who were present at the end of Prabhupada’s life said that the later pastimes were the most intimate. I wrote that statement as a concession to the viewpoint expressed by those wonderful servants who were with him at the end, such as Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Bhavananda and others. It was their opinion that these later pastimes were more intimate than the 1966 ones, and they presented many reasons why this was true. Actually, however, those devotees were not present for the 1966 pastimes. Neither do I, who was there in 1966, concede that for me the later pastimes were more intimate. In fact, for me

Prabhupada was aloof in the later pastimes, and I was not able to break through the barrier. It was the same barrier that Prabhupada personally had to break for me in 1966 when he said, 'If you love me, then I will love you.'

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***Every Day, Just Write, Volume 1:***

***Welcome Home to the One Big Book of Your Life***

pp.12-13

“The Sunday school will tell us what to do. I beseech you, sir, please pray, undo this button.

“Minuet, Krsna, Krsna. We dance the Lord's way—even elephants can prance on tiptoe under bright chandeliers.

“Too many gnats in here to dance, and I forgot to bring my *Srimad-Bhagavatam* out here, so I can't tell you how Daksa's second set of 1,000 sons were taken by Narada, who made them saintly and renounced.

“Renunciation is superior. Stick to your drama once and for all.

“What? You need to meet your emotional needs? Can we help you meet them in some other way?

“There's no joy in stepping down. But judge not and be not judged. Just keep dancing the minuet.

“O Bach, you served Krsna as "Gott" with fast beats and slow, violins, organs, served Him as a person or in His energy manifested in all things

holy God

who can lift Govardhana

no problem.

He doesn't need any hernia operations  
like Madhu, and He has no  
headaches but wants us all to return to Him  
from this  
darkening day of work.

Blow deep  
you who are not an angel  
old sense-gratifying monk  
ask forgiveness for your discrepancies  
while sitting near this calm lake.

Give me a verse and I'll lecture simple twice a week,  
ridin' the track

a Krsnaite

I bow and scrape

tow and bow—

and move into the *presto* movement,

sweating and working and loving through the hollow emptiness of my body  
made of flesh, bones, pain—

it all brings

Krsna

“I seek You, God, and pray to You. Please let me remember to bring the  
*Bhagavatam* next time I'm out here and when returning to the house, *if* lights are  
on, I'll read (and if not, by candle!). Or chant *japa* and be at peace.

“I am happiest when in line; pulling the traces of *bhakti*. I am a servant of the Lord, not of the senses and mind. In mantras find God!”

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***Every Day, Just Write, Volume 1:***

***Welcome Home to the One Big Book of Your Life***

pp.16-17

**“5:15 A.M.**

“My unconscious often floats into my conscious. Of course, that happens when I get sleepy sitting in a chair, trying to chant a few more rounds. I wonder if I have abused transference of states from unconscious to conscious through the free-writing. Does that account for my inability to control the mind in *japa* even when I’m awake? I don’t usually blame it on the free-writing because it’s already been going on. Free-writing looks into what is going on already and then tries wholeheartedly to bring one to a Krsna conscious state. I hope for Krsna conscious states flowing from the uncontrolled to the controlled. Prabhupada says we are all innately Krsna conscious.

“I don’t want my Krsna consciousness to be simply a matter of reiterating what I just read. It should be more than that. At the same time, I don’t mean to make light of what I get from reading. It is primary and called *sravanam-kirtanam*.

“The truth is eluding me,

the *satyam param*, the *Bhagavatam*.

Satya, a girl who married an older man and

no longer writes me, although I’m the guru.

But I am not the guru of her heart. Just as well  
 because I am somewhat contaminated and we see  
 most of these Western so-called gurus sooner or  
 later give up trying and give in to  
 their psycho-physical natures.

“Fortunately I do this in writing  
 and don't commit worse barbs. This is the worst.  
 I hope this is the worst. I don't even jog or binge  
 or pig-out on ice cream and bran muffins  
 like the nutrition Ph.D. who confessed it  
 and then told us how to kick such habits  
 by sitting through them, feeling all the feelings but  
 not giving in to actually eating  
 the homemade vanilla ice cream and bran muffins  
 or whatever it is that makes you cry and  
 yearn as you sit on your couch and  
 the fantasies roar over your *gayatris*.  
 You think going to India would help?”

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***Every Day, Just Write, Volume 1:***

***Welcome Home to the One Big Book of Your Life***

pp. 20-21

**November 17, 12:30 AM**

“I’m a writer, but now I’m sacrificing product in favor of the diary expression. I hope to also go beyond the usual diary concerns of self into writing exercises and toward the deeper self, into life itself, into *sastra* and the holy name. I don’t seem capable now of a concentrated, sustained effort in reading or writing. This is partly due to health. We read of students writing their Ph.D. theses or a writer burning intensely as he creates his novel, etc. I do a little every day in this roomy form. It’s also a form. Other things to do, like writing letters, also occupy me.

“Just spent about twenty minutes with Cc., Lord Caitanya’s expressing direct meaning of *Vedanta-sutra* to Sarvabhauma.

“Brahman means Supreme Brahman. Absolute Truth is both personal and impersonal, but personal is stronger. One must favor direct meaning of *sastra* (*brahma-sabda*) over interpretations, inferences, etc. Lord Caitanya is convincing him.

Read it, little man,  
and save your soul.

“A disciple writes that she is overwhelmed with material misery. She has seen so much suffering and death in her life, and she wants to use the negative energy to push herself from all attachment and to attain the spiritual world. She wants me to instruct her how to make a dramatic leap forward. I don’t think I can, or I’d be leaping myself. I can only tell her to be patient. She doesn't think she’ll make it back to Godhead in this lifetime and fears being reborn into yet another life filled with suffering. Yeah.

“She says she's turning to *japa* and sometimes cries out, but at other times loses that feeling. She wants to come to me and pour out all her feelings. I’m no rock to sustain all storms. Neither do I know enough deep suffering experienced with the

eye of Vedic wisdom to overcome it right on the battlefield of sorrow. Krsna has spared me. I teach what I can, tossed in my own teacup by the slightest storms. Still, we have *sastra*. We have what Narada says, what Vyasa says, and what Prabhupada says. A wise man doesn't lament for the living or the dead.

“We have to turn the ferry around in the water (white-capped waves) and head back in the other direction. Each day from morning to night, sing a little song of sorrow and tepid joy and restrained senses, and hang in there.”

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## ***Journal and Poems, Volume 2***

pp.106-7

### **“September 21**

“Devotees stop at Gita-nagari on their way home from the world meeting. This morning Srila Harikesa Maharaja, Guru-Gauranga, and Pancaratna continued discussions of the conference themes. While Harikesa Maharaja was explaining to me how *varnasrama* management should work in ISKCON, I admitted to him that I could barely understand the concepts. I said that ISKCON management is becoming so sophisticated and demanding that I feel I can't keep up with it. I asked him what he thought my role was. ‘You are like a *rsi*,’ he said. I should not leave the GBC, he said, but work in a more brahminical way. He said I could give people the most important thing, Krsna consciousness, and guide leaders when they become materialistic. In *varnasrama* everyone contributes according to their karma and *guna*.

“Guru-Gauranga said they have no such beautiful autumn days in Europe. There summer turns into a wet winter. Here for more than a week it has been sunny,

warm and dry. Leaves crunch underfoot, acorns pop, and dried cherries lie on the ground. The goldenrod are past their prime, browning. It is a yellow, brown, and green autumn painting, Krsna's picture.

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

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### ***Passing Places, Eternal Truths***

pp.291-92

#### ***“My Purpose While Traveling***

***1:18 P.M.***

“What is my purpose while traveling? Seems confused. When Nanda told me of a Godbrother who was going to America to meet with Hridayananda Maharaja in Berkeley regarding university preaching, I perked up. Why? It signaled to me that just as they have their academic field, so I have my writing field—and I'd like to awaken to it more. One difference is that they are able to work by combining their strength, and I have to work alone.

“Give me more alone. That seems to be the sole benefit of thinking about Bach sitting at the harpsichord composing his chamber music: it makes me feel alone.

“There are parts of the creative process—of anyone's creative process—where you have to go alone to create. The sharing comes later. First, you have to sit in the dark, small space in the back of a van, or in a cluttered room on the dark, hard

bench and create. There is no superstition or falsity involved. The work is the work. There is no point trying to categorize it or justify it. Just be, let emotions play over you, feel the subtle, and if possible, sublime variations of feeling . . . until it becomes tedious.

“And then? And then nothing. You remain your spiritual master's *cela* even in this Italian campground

while the wind buffets and it rains and

“it's quiet despite the fact that Italian pop music is drifting over here like wet leaves

“the wind. And then?”

“You remain true, and you sit for awhile to ask the Lord to convey a new direction.”

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***The Story of My Life, Volume 2***

pp. 155-56

“Madhurya-lila quoted *The Nectar of Devotion*, in which it is stated that particular propensities are not just material but are spiritual tastes.

“I’m grateful to the devotees for speaking in this way. I have faith in the integrity of this approach, and I know that Krishna is fully capable of stepping in and changing our service if He wants. I don’t want to think that after 30 years of service I have no idea how to please Krishna. I want to go on doing what I’m doing, but at the same time ask Him to help me improve, go deeper, become pure, and so on.

“Go to Vrndavana in a humble mood and pray to Krishna. He can do anything; though it may not be what you think is going to happen.

*[“Digression update: While dictating this autobiography, Baladeva remarked (regarding the preceding section) that I seem to be ‘obsessing’ on this particular point – wanting to serve with my best intelligence, and that this is the best way to surrender. Why do I feel guilty about it? Why the uncertainty? Why the constant analysis? It may be that on this point I have faced so much resistance from the managers in ISKCON that I feel the need to defend myself, and even to justify myself, to myself. I always come out in favor of doing what I’m doing, but I still can’t seem to stop reassessing my approach over and over again.*

*“Baladeva reminds me that he asked the same question while I was living in California: Why am I always defending myself? Apparently, this is what I said: ‘If I don’t defend myself, who will?’ Is this just a manifestation of the material tendency? Eating, sleeping, mating, and defending? I have visited and revisited this discussion in my books so often that my readers may be disturbed by it. They may doubt me, wonder why I don’t just come to a conclusion and drop the subject, once and for all.*

*“But, on the other hand, it’s not a bad idea to occasionally reassess your position in devotional service.]”*

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### ***Prabhupada Appreciation***

pp. 146-47

“Srila Prabhupada himself expresses the mood of separation from Krsna in the poem he wrote while crossing the Atlantic Ocean aboard the Jaladuta:

“Today that remembrance of You came to be in a very nice way. Because I have a great longing I called to You, I am Your eternal servant, and therefore I desire Your association so much. Oh Lord Krishna, except for You there is no other means of success.”

“Separation from Srila Prabhupada works on the same principle as separation from Krsna. Srila Prabhupada began training his disciples in service in separation right from the beginning. In 1967, he traveled away from his band of New York followers for the first time, and went to San Francisco to open a second temple. The devotees in New York continued to hold classes and to follow the way of life Srila Prabhupada had introduced to them, but they felt bereft without his personal association.

“Prabhupada wrote in his first letter to the New York temple explaining the principles of *vapuh* and *vani*: ‘Presence of the transcendental sound received from the spiritual master should be the guidance of life.’ He also told them that they could place his picture on his sitting places and this would give them solace.”

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***Here Is Srila Prabhupada***

pp.125-26

“I am surprised to see how he is glowing and radiant. I don’t understand much about the nature of the spiritual world, but I recognize that he is present in his spiritual body.

“He seems disappointed to see how I’ve become feeble. Maybe he didn’t recognize me because I wear glasses now, I’m older. But he looked the same. I know he is seeing beyond my body; he looks right into my soul.

“I felt like a young man again just by massaging him. Why haven’t my *anarthas* left me after so many years? I thought he was conveying spiritual enthusiasm to me just by allowing me to massage him and be with him again. I know spiritual science is taught by the exchange of questions and answers, and that those answers have to be based on *sastra*, but the spiritual presence of a realized soul is the most potent. He can grant love of Krsna. You can’t get it any other way.”

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### ***Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name***

pp.200-1

“A very small DHL van drove right past the house without stopping. M. ran onto the road and waved to him. He came back and delivered our package. I told them not to send me letters during the *japa* retreat, so this package contains only a copy of *Caitanya-bhagavata*, some used tapes—plus a few letters. Even those few letters are enough to distract me. Now I can see the difference between the first row of distraction and the second row. By coming to the *japa* retreat, I have, after a week, mostly removed or reduced the first line of distraction. That is, the daily concerns of my work, my personal relationships, and so on. I have been chanting better even though I cannot get free of the second line of *maya*’s attack—the old memories. I appreciate now that this mail package has arrived how much the distractions have lessened.

“Chanting with the distraction of my day-to-day life makes me want to get my rounds done. There is business to take care of and people to deal with. This is an offensive attitude toward the holy name; it prevents me from loving Krsna in His *nama-rupa*.

“Did you ever have the impression that someone was hurrying you and trying to get rid of you? I think of a clerk at the information desk of the passport office in Manhattan. Her function is merely to decide who should go where as they try to apply for their passports. If you try to settle your affairs with her or ask her a more detailed question, she gets rid of you with a rude, ‘Who's next?’ Do we deal with *harer nama* like that? What to do?”

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***Here Is Srila Prabhupada***

p. 89

“In the very last verses written by Bhaktivinoda Thakura, he begins,

“No matter whenever and wherever I happen to take birth, let my loving affection and attachment remain unshaken throughout each and every lifetime for the following things: for my divine spiritual master ...’  
(*Sri-Sri Sva-Niyama-Dvadasakam*, Verse 1).

“And he ends this final piece stating,

“Always following behind his own *manjari* guru, in his own spiritual body of a *manjari* also, he finally renders all kinds of

variegated eternal services for the exclusive worship of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna.’ (Verse 13)

“I always want to be at your feet, Srila Prabhupada. But when a devotee once said that to you, you chuckled, ‘That is not possible. My feet are always moving.’ Then let us keep your lotus feet in our minds and in our works and words. Your words flow from your books into us, and we regularly receive them and regain our lives. My own words—which I call original—and my own feelings—which I claim are unique—actually come from my association with you. How else could I feel love for Krsna and disgust for illusion and sin, if not by your association? You said, ‘The guru doesn’t create the disciple’s spiritual life. It is dormant within each person. The guru awakens it.’ Yes, but you awaken it and then daily tend to the spindly creepers.”

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***Journal and Poems, Volume 2 (July-December 1985)***

pp.87-88

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

“This morning I thought of another *Srimad-Bhagavatam* passage which substantiates the claim that natural hygiene has an important part in Krsna consciousness:

“If one lives otherwise [than as a *brahmacari*], it will manifest in the lust visible in his face and body. The word *vidyotamanam* indicates that the *brahmacari* feature showed in his body. That is the certificate that one has undergone great austerity in yoga . . . . Kardama looked healthy because he had directly received the nectarean sound vibrations from the lotus lips of the Personality of Godhead. Similarly, one who hears the transcendental sound vibration of the holy name of the Lord, Hare Krsna, also improves in health. We have actually seen that many *brahmacaris* and *grhasthas* connected with the International Society for Krsna Consciousness have improved in health, and a luster has come to their faces. *It is essential that a brahmacari engaged in spiritual advancement look very healthy and lustrous.*’ [italics mine] (purport, *Bhag.* 3.21.45 –47)

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

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## ***Write and Die: A Novel***

pp.136-37

“A devotee from Vrndavana wrote, ‘I saw Nimai dasa yesterday sitting by a big table covered with colorful books of yours. Any way that I can get to read stuff you’ve recently completed?’ The answer is no, because none of it has been published. And what would he find in it? A stairway to the stars? He would enter the path of suffering with me. See if he likes that. It’s not a twenty-four hour *kirtana* at the house of Srivasa Thakur with Mahaprabhu leaping up and down in ecstasy. It’s also within the realm of Vaisnavism. In any religion there is the path of tears and search, regret and pain. He feels he is outcast, but maybe he is not. Maybe he is closer to the Lord than he thinks. Is that what Shay meant when he said, ‘I may be closer than I think’? But the only sign I see is my own distaste. Oh! I see leaves. Yes, I see leaves, wet and damp, and they seem to speak of God. And the trees, and everything in nature that catches your view. Like I said before, the white of the clouds at 4:30 P.M., or anytime. God is everywhere to the observant one. But not to the self-pitier.

“And I ain’t he! Little bursts of ecstasy, little puffs of glee. Little signs of progress, breakthroughs come to thee. Hope, the thing with feathers, never asked a crumb from me. Now it’s 6:11 P.M. The sky is close to dark; soon my friends will return, and that’s a great blessing too. You have protection, people who love you and care for you. Don’t bitch, my friend, don’t say, ‘My *sadhana* is low, this is my complaint.’ Say, ‘You’re doing well. You’re breaking through, although you could do better, and in time, you will.’”

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## ***Passing Places, Eternal Truths***

pp. 159-60

### **“The Summer Marathon**

“Inner, inner? I’d say *sastra* is inner, but it’s more Absolute Truth. It’s there on the page, waiting for me to take it in with submissive and attentive reading. And *japa*. Yeah, I’m on a mission. I’ll go to Wicklow and later to Belfast to speak to the devotees whatever I know out of my allegiance to Prabhupada’s books.

“I don’t have any inner thing right now. Inner pockets of sweatpants contain earplugs and Kleenex. I’m aware I ought to write something appropriate for the end. I could give my *sankirtana* results: how many lectures did I give over the last ten days? How many *mangala-aratis* did I lead? How many Godbrothers did I meet? How many miles in service?

“Is our sincerity so measurable, or our surrender? Our willingness to serve and help others? Our threshold of tolerance? Our freedom from the propensity to find fault or to be envious, to be fearful, nice or not nice?

“‘How long?’ the cobbler and the *brahmana* asked Narada, ‘How long will it be—how many births—before I will get liberation and go to Vaikuntha?’ The cobbler was simple and faithful. Lord Narayana said he’d come back to Godhead at the end of his present life. The *brahmana* was puffed up and doubtful when he heard of the Lord’s inconceivable pastimes. That *brahmana*, Lord Narayana said, would have to wait many lifetimes. When the *brahmana* heard that, he became angry! The cobbler was in bliss meditating on the *acintya* nature of the Supreme Person, who puts a banyan tree into each seed.”

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## Writing Sessions

### *May Apples*

***Stroudsburg, PA – Queens, NY – Philadelphia, PA (May 5-13, 1996)***

#### ***“Writing Session #9***

***9:31 A.M.***

“Finally get to write. Up ‘late’ from last night at the 26 Second Avenue program. I said it’s gilding the lily if you give a ‘spiritual name’ to 26 Second Avenue. It’s got a name, 26. I pretend I am an intense *bhakta* who closes his eyes when he speaks, reminiscing of those days, and I am pretending now that I have got something to say. It’s snug here at night with earplugs in. I’ve been sleeping more than usual ever since we left Samika Rsi’s and the writing retreat schedule. Good, the body is taking the rest it needs.

“Lord Caitanya cleansed the Gundica temple to demonstrate *anartha-nivrttih*.

“Get a hold of yourself and a topic. A Writing Session says no topic is needed. But only a sympathetic audience should hear it. Same as my art show. Don’t run it during the Centennial activities. Avoid too many crowds or too much officialdom.

“So many people last night greeting me. Some handing me a note or a knowing nod, ‘Hello.’ I could barely recognize each one – not possible as I made my way out of the door. Not at all like it was when I was a newcomer in 1966. Such a

different crowd, people from the Caribbean, and they see me as a guru. The worst moment was when a devotee saw me and changed the *kirtana* to ‘Jaya Guru Maharaja.’ ‘Tell him to stop,’ I said. When a fool is your friend, he gets you into trouble.

“No wildflowers of any kind. I was given a garland of florist’s roses and other flowers. Not in touch with the earth. But the concrete street is also the earth. You walk out of the storefront and see the car that will take you. It’s a hundred feet or so away. So, for that whole distance you’re on your own, you’re a street person in Manhattan. You walk on the cement plain. See the Empire State Building. Cockeyed angles. All building and who to confront? Daring, on the loose for a hundred feet. A man calls out, ‘Satsvarupa! You’ve got a ride?’ It’s a guy in a gray Cadillac. He says, ‘You remember me from Trinidad?’ I don’t but I say that I do. Another man asking me to pray for him when he goes tomorrow for the interview to get his green card. ‘It’s such a nice thing’ to get the green card and to be able to live in rich America, in the borough of Queens. Of course, I am a national here, so it’s no problem for me. But if I were born somewhere else . . .

“You are hoping there is some value to what you are saying. There’s been a cool spell for a while before spring settles in—if it does before it goes. For the farmers all these spells and moods of the current season are crucial. Too much rain or too little. Oh, our Quakers, pancakes, compliments, little lives. Where will you be on June 9th, World *Harinama* Day? We would like your presence at Tompkins Square Park to chant as Swami did in ’66. We are inviting Allen Ginsberg to come. Don’t they know he basically doesn’t like Hare Krsna people and doesn’t even like God? He won’t come and that’s good. If he did come it would be uneasy. Sure. The

ceremony will be observed by clashing, big whopper cymbals. It won't be like it was back then. No need for me to add to the confusion. It will be a nice day celebrating and can be duly reported.

“The holy name is purifying no matter who chants it. World *harinama* is a serious occasion for prayer all over the world, so there may be God's grace on the world and even avert planetary disasters.

“Me, I don't count, not for much.

“May apples grow a little while only. Crowds of them on a back road in my old place of residence. Lowly existence. When summer is hot, I think they fade away, or they hang on and get bitten by bugs. No one comes to eat the fruit.

“You are writing in a downplaying mood as if to say ‘I'm not much and neither is anybody else.’ That's not uplifting. The Swami wasn't like that. He spoke of Krsna and advocated that others become Krsna conscious. You see, I'm getting this mood off my chest, so that by tonight I can be a bit evangelistic in my speech that is required.

“Our car pulled away from 26 Second Avenue while a group of people stood outside seeing me off with *pranamas* and waves of the hand. It was a scene not connected in mood to 1966 and Swamiji. What would you prefer? That you leave the place in black denims and walk around the corner to where you lived on First Street and Swamiji is there in his apartment with just a few boys?

“I don't know. I can accept this present, especially if I could follow what he says in his eternal-speaking books about the necessity to cleanse the heart before the Supreme Lord Krsna will enter there.

“Rouse people to fully surrender. I said he attracted us to surrender, to accept him as guru but not that we would become pure devotees at once. I am living proof

of that. They can respect me and I can respect myself for still being impure after thirty years of practice, still being neophyte – but still being here and a disciple. I have even lost ground in some ways. Lost youth, lost preaching fervor, but I am still here.

“Look up some passage in *Prabhupada Meditations* that you might want to read.

“The earnest diarist. Reading one diary that I wrote at Lough Derg in October-November 1995. I like it.

“You can’t help but be honest. So yes, I was in a downplaying mood as I wrote this one, sour spring season, death taste in my mouth – seeing people as foolish, as attached. Seeing it out of sync with ’66 memories and with pure devotion. But then I saw saving grace – that at least we are all here in the shelter of the Lord and plenty of sincere devotees. To cultivate a congregation (or an individual self, ‘I’) takes patience. Plenty of patience.

“I won’t be at World Holy Name Day (a phrase and concept coined at the Centennial headquarters), but I will chant on that day and every day my sixteen, chant so hard that I wear off the skin on three fingers. (My skin is so sensitive and thin that even my chanting wears it out.)

“And he waits for his prison sentence.

“And I wait for the hour to be up.

“Reminisce. We appreciate the Swami. Find a kernel of relishable truths you could read from. A happy surprise. Give it your go. I don’t care, I will perform as best I can and relax in the car ride back to Queens, telling them, ‘The first eight years of my life, I lived on 76th Street off Atlantic Avenue,’ but no one knows

anything about that except memories and stories that aren't even Krsna conscious,  
so what's the use?

“It would shock the  
parishioners to tell them  
I was very afraid of all dogs  
would shriek to see a huge  
one like a Great Dane –  
and I didn't have a father at  
home and sucked my thumb.  
Stevie at 76th Street  
and the war is over.

*“(One half-hour, Queens apartment, May 9, 1996)”*

***“Writing Session #10***

***5:15 P.M.***

“Very little time for this one. We have to get ready and Madhu will be in here probably. May apples. Strawberries for lunch in a whipped crème pie. Remember the annual “Strawberry Festival” at the Moravian Church, Great Kills? All kinds of pies and cakes and everything with strawberries to raise funds for that church. You went there as a boy. Our Roman Catholic church was more “big time” gambling.

“O hearers, may this flow. Tonight, I am as ready as I'll ever be. Be honest and say, ‘Yes, I remember the Swami.’ And to the degree that I don't feel it, that's not their business. Just play your excerpt of his lectures and comment on whatever

you can. You are not the greatest lecturer ever to set foot into that place. It's like a radio show. Let them ask questions and I can preach. That comes naturally to me. Just be there and play his '66 tapes. I don't have to push it and push it – it's already there, the nostalgia and the philosophy of Krsna consciousness and whatever dedication I have. Then tomorrow we leave. This is a little journal written in the spring during a cold spell. I wear a scarf and hat in the room, and sweater and sweatshirt. Boom-boom music from the street, but not much.

“Batten the hatches, glue your teeth in, put on fresh *tilaka*, carry a headache pill in your pocket just in case, and a pen and pad, and the tape you'll play, and pray on beads if you get a chance. And converse in the car with the driver if he wants to. Give them what you can.

“Hare Krsna Hare Krsna.

“The truth report. The world of Hare Krsna. Those preachers are kind. They are affectionate well-wishers of people coming to Krsna consciousness. That's nice. I am not so open but have my own role to be “Guru Maharaja” to some. They ask me to resume holding Vyasa-puja. I could consider it. And then go off to India.

O Lord, energy of the Lord, what do you think?

Get ready to go out. Answer your mail.

There is no hope for the *karmis* unless they take to Krsna consciousness. Do I believe it? I'm just telling people *lilas* and truths of Krsna consciousness for those already inclined to hear it. That's what we do, talk of our spiritual master who was here thirty years ago and we were here too. It's natural we do this. The memory is thin? Then thicken it. Twine the rope strong, the connection. Don't let it atrophy. Speak in that place for your purification. You'll do all right.

Smooth-skinned youngsters. Angelheaded – naw, I don't want that 'Howl' allusion.

“Sing spring.

“Krsna consciousness, get on the road. Precious time and dangers too. What else can we do? Turn to the Lord. It's not just a matter of increasing quotas of reading or *japa*, although that may help. The thing is love, dependency, calling out, remembering and serving for His pleasure.

“Krsna wants you to serve Him. That's all. That will make you happy.

“Write three more minutes. A scarf. A doodle. You've got a black pen but can't draw except the same man, the simple man with *tilaka* walking, or close-up of his face, or your naïve Radha-Krsna. I don't even attempt Lord Caitanya and full associates. Too much, okay, okay.

“Chant the mantras.

“Folks, we may travel together, and when it is your turn to lecture or write or draw, may I pay attention to you as you have done to me. I am taking more than my share of your attention and service from others. Say I'm giving to personal writing. I think of it that way.

“Next life menial service for the Vaisnavas, and you may not be an author. You published enough books in this lifetime to use up a lot of good karma and taken so much service from others. Are you giving back to them – freeing them from birth and death? Well, I point the way. Tell them tonight – surrender to Krsna.

“Haribol. What else might I say?

*“(Fifteen minutes, Queen apartment, May 9, 1996)”*