

Free Write Journal #138

April 9, 2021

*

*

*

Free Writes

Letter from Manu

I received a letter from Manu dasa in Ireland. I am relieved that he likes my new books. This is what he wrote me:

“I am in the middle of reading *Seeking New Land*, and I am enjoying it thoroughly. The intro by Rev. John Endler was of benefit again, but it is an exciting journey on all fronts. The prose and poems blend real well.

“*Kaleidoscope* is, for me, one of the books where you push the boundaries of language the most. I found it very profitable at one point for me to write in the margins what I felt you were saying. I could have been correct or not, but I was enjoying the attempt to work it out. There was copious material to work with, and I find it exciting that you are working this way back in the 1990s along with all the other genres which you were working with, both writing and painting. I tend to approach the book in an adventurous way and delve in and get absorbed in the flow.

“Thank you for all the Journals because it helps to keep in touch with all that you are thinking and doing.”

I think I am the only one in ISKCON who is writing the way I am. You won't find essays like this in *Back to Godhead* magazine or any other books written by contemporary devotees. This used to make me feel a little alienated, and a little hesitant. But now I've become confident that this way is my vocation. It is my contribution to the Krsna Consciousness movement. I wrote most

of those books in the 1990s, and I hope I can still keep it up in the 21st century. I know that many readers will not be able to appreciate it. But when I get a letter like this from Manu, who is a very responsible devotee in the Irish *yatra*, I am gratified.

Here is what Manu is doing when he is not reading my books:

“My progress with reading the books was a little slower than I expected because I had become more busy during this ‘lockdown.’

“I have been to help in the Dublin restaurant, as we are paying a mortgage on the building and we are only allowed trade with take away meals. It means our income is down seventy-five percent, so a lot of us are doing voluntary service to keep the wage bill down. It’s tough, but I think we’ll pull through okay.

“I ‘sneak’ up every week to Govindadvipa for temple council meetings, and there has been some good progress. We got a COVID government grant for 15,000 pounds, we are planning for two new cottages and a new Deity paraphernalia building. And we’ve got some good donations to go ahead with these, although we still need a good sum for new electric and water infrastructure and we are fundraising for this. I think we will have a nice small retreat place for devotees and guests at the end of everything.”

Radha-Govinda

Radha-Govinda have changed Their dress. Radharani’s skirt has a prominent swan amidst pink lotuses. The hue of the water is the same color as the backdrop’s lake, which also has white swans and lotuses. Govinda also has a swan and lotuses. I hope those who have access to Radha-Govinda’s *darsana* on my Facebook page will see this outfit because it is especially nice.

***Bhagavad-gita* Lecture**

I heard Bhurijana speaking from the *Bhagavad-gita* on the four kinds of persons who turn to Krsna. They are all called *sukrtinas* or pious persons, whereas those who turn away from Krsna is known as *duskrtinas*. The first *sukrtina* mentioned is one who is in need of money. The second is one who wants relief from disease. The third is one who is curious about the absolute truth, and the fourth is the *jnani*, who turns to Krsna because he wants to know Him in truth. Krsna says this *jnani* is the best of the four. He doesn't demand anything from Krsna; he just wants to know Him and worship Him. Usually when Prabhupada discusses the *janis*, he minimizes them. He calls them mental speculators. But in this section of the *Bhagavad-gita* where the four persons who turn to Krsna are described, the *jnani* is called the best and very dear to Krsna. He is not like the other three persons who turn to the Lord with some motive or demand. His whole desire is to know and understand Krsna.

*

*

*

I heard Bhurijana Prabhu lecturing on transcendental knowledge. He started by saying that even in the material world, to get knowledge you need to go to a certified teacher, someone who has a Ph.D or M.A. from an institution. But no institutions in the world teach the transcendental knowledge of the soul. I don't remember the rest of Bhurijana's talk, but I recall that just in the Second Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita* there is so much teaching of transcendental knowledge. Krsna teaches that as a boy grows up to be a youth, then an older man, and then he dwindles and dies, so the soul within the body continues to live, and by transmigration takes another body according to his activities in the present body. This elementary teaching of transmigration is known clearly outside Vedic culture. In the Second Chapter of the *Gita*, Krsna teaches that for the soul there is no birth or death; he existed in the past, he exists in the present, and he will continue to exist in the future. The success of life is to become free of changing material bodies and attain a spiritual body, joining with the Lord and His associates in the spiritual world. This transcendental

knowledge has to be received by the descending process. One has to hear it coming down from Krsna or His representatives. Ascending knowledge is not reliable, as it depends on the speculations of an imperfect person.

Bhakti Charu Maharaja

I have been listening to his classes. I remember when I went to him to find out if the Lord Buddha mentioned as an incarnation in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* was the same Lord Buddha that's described in the well-known stories about Buddha. He immediately said that the Buddha mentioned as an incarnation in the *Bhagavatam* is different than the Buddha we hear about in general. The story we hear of Buddha is that he was a prince and lived in the palace, not knowing anything about the outside world. One day he went out and he saw a dead man, a diseased man, a sick child and a suffering monk. This was all new to Gautama Buddha, and he asked, "Will this happen to me?" He was told that all these sufferings would come to him also, and he concluded that the world is a place for suffering misery. Then he sat under a *bodhi* tree in meditation until he finally realized the truth about suffering, and how to become enlightened and attain *nirvana*. Bhakti Charu and I were glad to hear Puri Maharaja tell us the difference of the two Buddhas. I decided not to write about the popular story of Buddha but stick to the description in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*: that Buddha came mainly to stop the violence of animal slaughter.

The Marriage of Kardama and Devahuti

The sage Kardama meditated for ten thousand years and finally gained the *darsana* of the Supreme Lord. The all-knowing Lord could understand Kardama wanted to marry a qualified wife to help him in his spiritual life. Devahuti had no opportunity for social mixing with Kardama, but she had heard about him from Narada Muni. Hearing at length about his exemplary character, his saintliness and yogic power and other good qualities, Devahuti gave her heart to him and was determined to marry Kardama. In confidence she informed her parents of her desire. Her father,

Svayambhuva Manu, was very concerned that his daughter get the proper husband. Prabhupada writes that this is the ideal kind of marriage arrangement. Girls were not thrown into the street to find their own husband out of their whimsical conception of love. To have the marriage arranged by the parents is the first-class method of matchmaking. So Svambhuva Manu approached the cottage of Kardama with his daughter and spoke to convince the sage to accept Devahuti as his bride. Kardama was favorably disposed to the proposition, being attracted to Devahuti's beauty and good character. He said he would accept her, but he had a condition: he didn't want to stay in married life for the whole duration of his life. He desired to give his wife one excellent son and then leave for the forest to live again as a solitary sage. Prabhupada approves of Kardama's condition and says that marriage should be to produce a saintly son or a ray of Visnu, and not to beget many children like cats and dogs out of sense gratification. The two agree to their union, and they are properly married.

*

*

*

Kardama Muni, by his vast yogic powers, produced a huge flying mansion for the habitation of Devahuti and himself. Devahuti was astounded to see this wonderful mansion, fully equipped with amenities and luxuries,. But she was ashamed to enter it. By serving her husband as a menial servant, she had become skinny, her hairs were matted and tangled, and her dress was poor and unattractive. Her skin was caked with dirt. Kardama read her mind and became compassionate upon her. He told her to enter the Bindu-Sarovara lake, and there she would be served by thousands of Gandharva women who would restore her original beauty. The Gandharvas bathed Devahuti with scented oils, and she was given Ayurvedic tonics to restore her youthful beauty. She was dressed in the finest clothes and ornaments. Devahuti did this because she thought that she was too emaciated and her husband would not be attracted to union with her. When the Gandharvas had completed their work, Devahuti came out of the waters, and Kardama was very pleased and attracted to see her. She appeared just like the young beautiful princess she was

originally, enamored of her husband. Husband and wife then boarded their flying mansion, which could travel anywhere in the universe. It was equipped with all amenities for sense gratification, and together they began traveling through space, enjoying each other in sexual union. They visited all the pleasure gardens and pleasure places that all the demigods visited, and enjoyed life on the standard of the demigods. Kardama Muni expanded himself into nine forms, and from his semen nine beautiful daughters were born. Devahuti was very happy to see her daughters, but then Kardama Muni prepared to leave home as he had promised and live the life of a *sannyasi*. This made Devahuti very unhappy. She scratched the ground with her toenails and shed tears. She spoke pitifully to her great husband and said all the time they had spent traveling and enjoying in the aerial mansion, and even their production of nine children, was a waste of time. The girls would grow up and find their husbands, but Devahuti lamented that she would then be left alone. She pleaded with her husband to grant her fearlessness. This is the responsibility of a superior to his subordinate. Devahuti wanted Kardama to give her a son. Kardama agreed to her proposal, and he stayed some days with her, making her pregnant with another child. He told her this child would be an incarnation of the Personality of Godhead. He would be called Kapiladeva, and He would teach His mother—and through her the whole world—the transcendental system of *sankhya-yoga*, which leads one to devotional service of the Supreme Lord.

Approaching Prabhupada for Inspiration

I have a disciple who is an expert yoga teacher. She's been successfully running a studio to which many students attend. But now she's losing her motivation. The students are not coming to classes. She feels that she has hit a wall to push to the finish line. She takes each day wondering what Krsna wants. Her bank account is low, and this is her only income. Hoping that she can survive, she wonders what Srila Prabhupada would advise. Feeling alone, she feels like she's running out of steam and losing her motivation. It doesn't matter how hard something can be if you have the motivation and determination to continue. When you lose the motivation to

continue is when you realize you're in trouble. "That's how I feel."

She has asked me to share some wisdom. In a situation like this, I can advise her to pray personally to Krsna for some relief. It's not the position of the spiritual master to give advice in a material situation, but he can advise his disciple to pray personally. She can pray before Prabhupada's *murti* in the temple and cry tears of supplication. She can travel to 26 Second Avenue and make prayers in that auspicious place where Prabhupada himself faced so many difficulties. He kept his faith and vision there and started the movement of ISKCON. She can stay with Prabhupada there and imbibe his determination and inspiration. He continued, despite all difficulty.

Evolution of *Ekadasi* Fast in ISKCON

My disciple Krsna Bhajana (Dr. Christopher Joseph Hayton) is currently a student at the University of Wales. He has sent out a letter addressed to "Dear Devotee," asking for information on how Prabhupada introduced *Ekadasi* in the early days of the Hare Krsna movement. He wants to do an interview with any devotee who has memories or information about this. He has sent me examples of the questions he would ask.

I am afraid that I do not have memories or information about how Prabhupada gradually introduced *Ekadasi*, say in 1966 or 1967 or maybe even a little later. We must remember that Prabhupada kept things very simple in the beginning and did not introduce things right away. I invite senior devotees who read this *Journal* or who have received a letter from Krsna Bhajana to please respond to his questions or undergo an interview with him about it. I think of devotees like Malati devi dasi and Govinda dasi, who had early experience of cooking for Prabhupada. As ISKCON developed over the years, a lot of information appeared about observing *Ekadasi*, but it didn't come from Srila Prabhupada. There was a book produced by Krsna-Balarama Swami with intricate backgrounds on how each *Ekadasi* came about. But none of this came from Srila Prabhupada. There may even have been a second book published in ISKCON about observing

Ekadasi. Prabhupada introduced *Ekadasi*, saying we should fast from grains and beans; he did not tell us we should stay up all night singing *bhajan*s and reading books out loud. Those practices came from the book on *Ekadasi*. In Prabhupada's time *Ekadasi* was an ordinary day, but we fasted from grains and beans. He did not ask us to abstain from drinking water or some of the other stricter Gaudiya practices.

Once he introduced that we should practice *Ekadasi* by fasting from grains and beans, Prabhupada was very serious about our following this. He instructed the cooks and temple presidents on how to observe the *Ekadasi* menu. Prabhupada personally observed *Ekadasi* by fasting from beans and grains, but he did not perform further austerities. His focus was always on preaching and keeping the regular temple worship.

Krsna Bhajana can be contacted at his email address: kb1955@gmail.com.

Jesus Descends Unto Hell

I was raised as a Catholic boy. Every Sunday we would recite the Apostle's Creed. One line puzzled me—"He was crucified, died and was buried. *He descended into hell. On the third day he arose from the dead.*" Why did Jesus go to hell? What did he do there? Rev. Endler told me that the Christian commentators and scholars over the centuries have explained Jesus's descent into hell. He went there and told Satan, "You no longer have control over these souls. I am taking them with me." And so Jesus overpowered Satan and liberated all the souls in hell. I liked hearing that explanation.

Picture of Jesus

When I was in California some years ago with Jaya Govinda and his wife Madalena, (who is a Catholic), they showed me their special photograph of Jesus Christ. Madalena told me a holy nun received the direct *darsana* of Jesus. She asked him if she could take his photograph, and he

consented. This picture was on their altar in California. Now on Easter Day 2021, he has sent me an email reproduction of the portrait. I have asked him to procure a professionally photographed copy of his picture. I will put it on my wall. This Jesus is different than the blue-eyed, fair-complexioned portraits we see done by artists in the West. Jesus is a bit swarthy, and he has an abundance of black hair and a big beard. That seems more realistic to Jesus appearing the Mideast. I like the picture very much.

Jaya Govinda wrote me that he and his family will go at night to the Easter vigil. There is a 10:00 PM curfew as part of COVID restrictions. They are also in total lockdown until April 7th. But religious rites are considered essential needs in Italy, so they will be able to attend their Easter vigil.

Meister Eckhart

Rev. John Endler told me he found it difficult to lecture on Easter Sunday. He tended to think of the same talk every year. I thought a moment and then remembered that I had heard about a sermon given by Meister Eckhart. He said in his sermon that on Easter Sunday we should not only think of the resurrection of Jesus, but the worshiper should have Jesus be born in his own heart and soul on Easter Day. John was enlivened to hear my explanation. He went home and looked up the sermon by Meister Eckhart. He found that he gave two sermons: one for Jesus's birth and one for his resurrection. He said the same thing on two occasions, that on Christ's birthday or on his resurrection, the worshiper should have Christ "born" or "resurrected" in his own heart. We were both glad to hear this information from Eckhart's sermon.

*

*

*

From *Every Day, Just Write: Volume 2*

Search for the Authentic Self

pp.162-63

“December 7, 12:40 A.M.

“Reading . . . I read some Cc. this morning. Pray with it. First prayer is, ‘Please let me read nicely, with submission.’ You need to pray, because as Lord Brahma said:

*athapi te deva padambuja-dvaya-
prasada-lesanugrhita eva hi
janati tattvam bhagavan-mahimno
na canya eko 'pi ciram vicinvan*

“My Lord, if one is favored by even a slight trace of the mercy of Your lotus feet, he can understand the greatness of Your personality. But those who speculate to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead are unable to know You, even though they continue to study the Vedas for many years. (*Bhag. 10.14.29*, as quoted in *Cc. Madhya 11.104*)

“I pray for that by pausing as I read, quietly bowing my head and asking for it. I have the power to enter because I have brains to comprehend it, but more importantly, I already have Prabhupada’s mercy when he ordered me, ‘Whenever you get time, read my books.’ To pray and push out doubts takes practice. Finally, it requires direct mercy.

“It’s the same with writing. I have to write from a life filled with a devotional mood. Then it's worth something. Writing should express *bhava*, even the emotion

of emptiness. I wrote like this at Castlegregory. I went to the ocean and felt tiny and ordinary. That writing I called *Forgetting the Audience*, and I think it was the first time I had written like that.

“Writing isn’t crazy or simply passion. I want to get something out. I’m not in the grip of the inner critic, but I am learning to let go. Some nonsense may also come out, but I trust the process even though it doesn’t always lead to instant success. At least I feel relieved. Life is short, and soon we’ll die. We have to do what Krsna has allowed us to do before it’s too late, and we have to do it free from the pressure others place upon us wittingly or unwittingly. We have to face ourselves and develop a quiet kind of urgency that permeates everything we do. I didn’t resolve to discover God in the time I spent at Castlegregory. Rather, the last words written are a cry, ‘Where is *bhava*?’ I can almost hear the echo in waves crashing against the rocky shore as I read it again now.”

*

*

*

pp.164-165

“RARE CHANCE TO SERVE PRABHUPADA”

“I dreamt I was with Prabhupada, although the presence of the person in the dream wasn’t much like him. I went to a place where only a few people were gathered, then walked away thinking that Prabhupada didn’t want to be bothered. Then I said to myself, ‘This is a rare chance. You should go back and be with him.’ I went back and hung around, hoping to get some service to do for Prabhupada. The dream had different incidents like this of ‘Prabhupada’ reciprocating with us, either being pleased or his not being served nicely by our activities.

“Awake, I think of groupie and superficial activities that sometimes surround the guru—socializing and even politicking among his disciples. How to cut through all that? Sometimes we just want to get away from it all. In the dream, however, I was told to tolerate and to at least chalk up some bona fide service so that the guru would recognize me. Now that I'm awake, I think that service can also be rendered in separation from the main crowd who travel with the guru from place to place. Still, it is very important that we are recognized by the spiritual master and that he gives us direction so that we don't serve in whimsical ways.

“Fortunately I received a lot of direction during my life from Prabhupada, and much of it has been recorded in letters, as well as in my heart and memory. I can also read what Prabhupada wrote in his books. We shouldn't think those instructions are only general. For example, today I read how Prabhupada wants the devotees to go to Mayapur and chant congregationally. We each have to think in our lives how we can fulfill at least some part of his order and dedicate our lives to his mission. We can't do everything he asked of us, but we can take some portion of it and make it our all in all. Visvanatha Cakravarti advised this: make the order of the spiritual master your life and soul.”

*

*

*

pp.166-67,

“I was happy this morning. I felt my heart beating strongly and thought, ‘I could burst with happiness!’ It's the ecstasy of service, of empowerment, or electricity flowing through the line. I am alive and protected in His service. That is real happiness.

“I know it's not much. I have a long way to go before I can reach the *bhava* in which I am trying only to please Krsna and in which it is revealed that He is pleased with me. My cup runneth over, but it's still only a little cup. Take away my lunch, and my happiness may become tarnished. Give me a stubbed toe or a bruised shin and I lose my focus on the bliss.”

*

*

*

pp. 170-72

“In this morning’s Cc. reading in the temple we’ll discuss Lord Caitanya’s ecstatic bodily symptoms when He entered the Jagannatha temple. It’s significant that Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, although a Mayavadi, was fully acquainted with the science of *prema*. According to the *Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika*, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was formerly Brhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods. Thus he was able to discern that Lord Caitanya was experiencing the highest *maha-bhava*. The purport also demonstrates that Prabhupada is certainly capable of discussing the technical terminology of *raganuga-bhakti*. Still, he doesn't dwell on it.

“AVOIDING SURVEILLANCE: A DREAM

“I was sitting with three people around a table. We were high school students. Two of the boys—they were my pals—hit each other while the teacher looked on. My back was to the teacher, and I was glad she hadn't caught me hitting anyone.

“In a subsequent dream, I was talking to someone secretly, concealing myself from the authorities. I think we were hiding from the Nazis. The person with whom I was speaking came into a store where I was waiting and I played a tape recording of a phony conversation—‘Hello, how are you? Good day. Nice weather.’ This was supposed to throw the authorities off our track so we could say what we actually had to say, but I don't remember what that was.

“I want a private life, and I like to discourse with my friends not secretly but discreetly. Neither dream provided any resolution to these feelings or even hinted at ways in which such discretion could be carried out. Neither did they present a challenge to that mood. All I felt was that I had to escape surveillance.

“12:26 P.M.

“Ever since I gave class this morning (8:30-9:15 A.M.) and walked cheerfully down to the quay with the devotees, I’ve been struggling to subdue head pressure. I tried a wet rag, aromatherapy, rest, a hot/cold shower, deep breathing, and relaxation exercises. Now it’s lunchtime, and the pressure is still on the rise. Maybe the *bhakti*-filled lunch prepared by Syamananda will do the trick.

Anyway, it proves I am still a delicate creature
and can't run the mile marathon.

Simply give a class and this is what comes of it.

O swan, I'd rather

be writing vigorous songs

but can't now. Like you, I

float on the cold lake and wait.

Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare.

Let mantras be heartbeats.”

*

*

*

pp. 173-74

December 10

1:25 A.M.

“Yesterday I was not able to write here because of an all-day headache. Does that mean I should change the title to ‘Almost Every Day, Just Write’?”

“It’s not as easy as that. More questions and doubts about this writing come up on days when I am not able to actually get to the page. I’m still feeling shaky from yesterday, but I hope to clear the air and explain myself. However, the batch of mail has just arrived and must be tended to. It appears that my meditation of the last three weeks in which I was able to write and read undisturbed is broken. Still, that doesn’t mean I should stop writing.

“Here are some of the questions that arose yesterday:

“1.) How much of *Every Day* is written for therapy, coping, and how much with the hope to discover art or literature? 2.) If it is entirely therapy, then should my attitude toward it be different? Should its form of expression change?”

“Some answers:

“Art is also part of my therapy. I cope by writing. I practice writing.

“The form and subject of *Every Day, Just Write* will change according to time and place. When I am traveling or when I’m busy lecturing, the writing will reflect that. One might say, ‘The writing will be more shallow and less concentrated when you can’t work at it full time,’ but that’s not necessarily so.

“Doubts come to test how badly I want to write this book. It’s a new project in that I have decided to write it one volume at a time. I’ll use the umbrella title *Every Day, Just Write* and then subtitle each volume according to the mood in which it was written.

“The real response I have to give is that I shouldn’t write to make publishable literature. *Every Day, Just Write* can be a matrix from which other books can come. That’s what the subtitle of the first volume means: ‘Coming Home to the One Big Book of Your Life.’”

*

*

*

From ***Journal and Poems, Volume 1 (January-June 1985)***

pp.129-30

“OUR BODY IS FOR SERVICE TO KRSNA’

“An embarrassing aspect of my recovery programs thus far is that I have too little to show for them, even after taking considerable time off, such as the two months in Puerto Rico. The failure is not mine personally, but a failure of physical health. Yet one cannot help but feel disappointed. Of course, I have to take it philosophically and see that the frail body is up against the powerful material nature which is finally going to win out. One cannot remain healthy indefinitely, and you cannot conquer disease every time.

“When Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken contracted a terminal disease, he remarked that if there was a way to beat the disease, he would find it. Similarly, when Muhammad Ali developed a brain disease, he remarked that he would beat it. But these are pitiful statements. It is not within man’s power to beat these things. So at times like these we have to put our philosophy into practice—submit to the force of time (*kala*), but demonstrate a victorious will to go on serving Krsna. My friends advise me to rest now so I can gain twenty years of active service later. This reveals an appealing, dynamic aspect of *bhakti-yoga*. The *bhakti-yogi* is not interested in giving up the temporary material body and going to the eternal spiritual world. He is interested, but that is not his highest goal. The idea of personal salvation contains some selfishness. But the *bhakti-yogi’s* goal is to serve Krsna eternally in either a material or spiritual body. He simply wants to serve Krsna in

any condition. So with that in mind, devotees are encouraging me to recover my health and serve in this body for another twenty or thirty years.

“The Krsna consciousness movement is such a serious movement for saving people! If we can salvage a preacher, give him his temporary health, that will be important for the furtherance of this mission.

“When Sanatana Gosvami attempted to give up his life, Lord Caitanya said, ‘Your body belongs to Me.’ So my body belongs to Prabhupada’s movement, ISKCON, and to my disciples. Therefore I should take care.”

*

*

*

From ***Japa Transformations***

pp.87-88

“Ready to Offer All Respect

trnad api sunicena

taror api sahisnuna

amanina manadena

kirtaniyah sada hari

“One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.” (*Siksastakam*, Verse 3)

“My dear Lord Krsna, where are You? There You are, in my heart. There You are, everywhere, in Your impersonal nature. There You are, in Goloka Vrndavana with Your close associates. And where am I in relation to You? I am right now calling to You, seeking Your presence. My headache has mostly gone away. I have finally completed my minimum quota of *japa* after being behind since I woke so late (4:30 A.M.) this morning. I am at Your doorstep calling to You. Please enter my mind and never leave.

“I have recently read a statement by Bhaktivinoda Thakura about the qualifications for a competent chanter of Your holy names. He said, quoting Lord Caitanya, that we must be humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, and not expect praise but give respect to others according to their position. If we chant Your names in this consciousness, we will feel impelled to chant always in transcendental bliss. It is comforting and convincing hearing Bhaktivinoda Thakura speak on the glories of Your names. He cites many scriptures attesting that *harinama* is the most accessible method of reaching You. It is the practice and the goal itself. I just have to chant with his conviction as to the Name’s potency. That comes by my concentration, but ultimately, by Your mercy.

“I must have faith that even mediocre chanting is well worth my effort and that I gain spiritual credit — because You have invested all Your power in Your names. But unfortunately, I chant with offenses and do not feel the sublime pleasure of pleasing You when I chant. The remedy to this, You say, is to go on chanting, even at my offensive level. Keep on chanting, and the offenses will clear up. So I will chant more in the afternoon.

“One should be humble and think of himself as ‘lower than the straw in the street.’ Krsnadasa Kaviraja says he was lower than the worm in stool, and that if

anyone remembered his name, that person would lose his pious credits. This argues on the side of admitting one's faults. Krsnadasa Kaviraja felt this way about himself. And Haridasa Thakura counted himself a very fallen soul, born in a low family. But Krsna considered these persons to be elevated, and Lord Caitanya designated Haridasa Thakura the *namacarya*. What is the balance? One should consider oneself lowly, but as Krsna's representative, one can take a position of good standing in human society. He doesn't have to act like an inferior among his contemporaries. He can speak Vedic knowledge and criticize the foolish notions of the materialists. One should use his talents and resources in Krsna's service in an intelligent way."

*

*

*

From *Every Day, Just Write: Volume 3*

A Sojourn in Tapo-bhumi

pp. 364-65

"6:15 A.M., FREE-WRITE

"The surf is rolling.

Listen to the waves, listen to the waves

to the permanent waves,

to the joshing joshers, the avoidance of nonsense and sinful bad words. We have been made clean in mind, thoughts, and deeds by our spiritual master. In obedience to him I cut out bad words from my writing, although I leave in a little so you'll know I'm still human—as if that will help you.

"Free-write like the hawk harassed by crows. We walked through the narrow dirt streets. Rama-raya said, 'People are friendly here.' Baladeva said this particular walk was through a neighborhood near the Gaudiya temples, so the kids were the

offspring of devotees. I saw a group on the beach mocking us though. Did the others see it?

“Rancid piles of fish, two small dogs eating from their borders. The fishermen don't stop them, so why should I worry?”

“Don't worry about trying to reform others, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura says. Providence will take care of reform. Here is a quote by him which someone says sums up what I am trying to do:

“The world stands in no need of any reformer. The world has a very competent person for guiding its minutest happenings. The person who finds that there is scope for reform of the world himself stands in need of reform. The world goes on its own perfect way. No person can deflect it but the breadth of a hair from the course chalked out for it by Providence.

“When we perceive any change being actually affected in the course of events of this world by the agency of any particular individual, we also know very well that the agent possesses no real power at any stage. The agent finds himself driven forward by a force belonging to a different category from himself.

“The course of the world does not require to be changed by the activity of any person. What is necessary is to change our outlook to this very world. This was done for the contemporary generation by the mercy of Sri Caitanya. It could be known only to the recipients of His mercy . . .

“The scriptures declare that it is only necessary to listen with an open mind to the name of Krsna from the lips of a bona fide devotee.

As soon as Krsna enters the listening ear, He clears up the vision of the listener so that he no longer has any ambition of ever acting the part of a reformer of any other person, because he finds that nobody is left without the very highest guidance. It is therefore his own reform, by the grace of God, whose Supreme necessity and nature he is increasingly able to realize by the eternally continuing mercy of the Supreme Lord.' ('Sree Chaitanya in South India.' *The Harmonist*, May 1932)"

*

*

*

From ***Vandanam: A Krsna Conscious Handbook on Prayer***

pp. 2-4

2021 SDG Note: *My disciple Nitai is making new printings of my out-of-print books in India. He is making them available for the devotees there, with a smaller shipment being sent to the West.*

Here is an excerpt from Vandanam:

“The devotee giving the class in Vrndavana touched on the topic of reciting prayers. He said that it should be done at the time of greeting the Deities. As evidence, he quoted from *The Nectar of Devotion*, where the important *bhakti* practices are listed. There we find, ‘15. Chanting; 16. Offering prayers; 17. Reciting notable prayers.’ *Nectar of Devotion* also refers to the *Nrsimha Purana*, where it is stated,

“Any person who comes before the Deity of Lord Krsna and begins to chant different prayers is immediately relieved from all the

reactions of sinful activities and becomes eligible, without any doubt, to enter into the Vaikunthaloka.’ (NOD, ‘Reciting Notable Prayers’)

“One of the devotees attending the class asked if prayers could also be practiced by spontaneously speaking one’s mind and heart to Krsna. The lecturer said yes, but another devotee said no: we should only recite scriptural prayers composed by pure devotees because we are not advanced enough to pray properly. Another devotee commented that our main prayer should be the Hare Krsna mantra as mentioned by Prabhupada in the purport about Gajendra.

“I was enlivened by this discussion but wished there had been more encouragement for personal prayer. If the only time we ‘recite prayers’ is during the greeting of the Deities in the morning, that would amount to no more than three or four minutes. And yet the points raised by the devotees about perfect sastric prayers and the Hare Krsna mantra were valid.

“Later it occurred to me that what I had most wanted to hear in a class on prayer—and which hadn’t been mentioned—was the quality of attention and devotion given by the person who is praying.

“In the verse about Gajendra, it is stated that he concentrated the mind or consciousness in the heart, *samadhaya mano hr̥di*. (*Bhag.* 8.3.1) And this seems to be the essential point regarding prayer: whether one recites the *uttamasloka*s, prayers from the scripture, chants *japa*, or prays to the Lord from his personal thoughts and feelings, it should be done wholeheartedly and not mechanically.

“For the purposes of this book, *Vandanam*, I wish to use the word *vandanam* or prayer in this sense—as a state or quality. If recitation of *japa* is inattentive or offensive, then it can hardly qualify for the definition of prayer. Prayer occurs when

we break through the material coverings and actually speak to Krsna, chant His holy names, and enter the spirit of the sastric *stotras*.”

*

*

*

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

pp. 142-43

“I once heard an explanation about the destination of *raganuga-bhaktas* who follow Yasodamayi. There was a description of the various relationships they might have, and then the speaker said that it depends on their devotional service and their greed. According to our *sadhana* and *bhajana*, our destination will be determined. We may aspire to become the maidservants of Srimati Radhika, but it is a rare achievement.

“I was struck by this at the time, and again now as I remembered it. I like to hear the truth that our destination depends on our *sadhana* and *bhajana*. It makes me think that my remedial practice of *japa* is right. It is the way to go to the topmost stage, because I first have to tend to the crucial deficiencies in my foundation. Greed for the Name will lead to other spiritual greed.”

*

*

*

From ***Prabhupada Appreciation***

pp. 193-97

Keeping His Memory Alive

“Personal memorials are an important part of loving service to Prabhupada. Out of humility, Prabhupada did not ask for memorials; it was not his work, but ours.

Vedic culture has a tradition of worshiping the paraphernalia and places (*tirthas*) of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Any place connected with the Lord's pastimes is worshipable, and so also is the place connected with the Lord's devotee. Lord Caitanya asked the Six Gosvamis to excavate the lost *tirthas* of Vrndavana, and He Himself set the example by visiting those places.

“ . . . For the devotees of Prabhupada, his rooms are a sanctuary. We should visit them reverentially, go there to chant and pray, to come closer to Prabhupada and to renew our commitments to serve him. His rooms are *tirthas* and are available all over the world – – Vrndavana, Mayapur, London, Detroit, Los Angeles, Bombay, Toronto, etc. ISKCON's local members and GBC maintain them.

“Prabhupada was a world preacher, and as such, his places of pastimes can be visited. These tours to places outside of ISKCON can revive our memory of Prabhupada. Especially relishable is to tour his beginnings in New York City—the Bowery, 26 2nd Ave., Tompkins Square Park. Devotees and friends in the Boston area make a yearly pilgrimage and hold *sankirtana* at Commonwealth Pier on the anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's arrival in the United States. Devotees can also visit where he worked to produce his *Bhagavatams* before leaving for America.

“It is especially important to approach such *tirthas* in the correct mood, ready to serve the *tirtha* by prayerful remembrance. It is a good idea to have a reading about the significance of the place. This will help imbue the visit with proper understanding.”

*

*

*

From ***He Lives Forever: On Separation from Srila Prabhupada***

“We’ve been discussing in the evening class how Prabhupada was responding to the false hopes the disciples were offering. They encouraged him by saying that if he took his medicine and if he got a little strength, then he would get better. Yet actually he was not getting better. But the mood was that, as disciples, they should serve the spiritual master to the end. And Prabhupada wanted this.

“And that attitude of the disciple is described here: ‘The daughter of Vidarbha continued as usual to serve her husband, who was seated in a steady posture, until she could ascertain that he had passed away from the body.’ In a sense, Srila Prabhupada made his body like a laboratory of devotional service, so that the devotees could be tested—whether they would serve him to the end.

“Sometimes, if a neophyte devotee sees his spiritual master ill, he may become bewildered: ‘If he’s a pure devotee, how is it that my guru has become ill?’ Or he may become fearful: ‘What’s going to happen? My spiritual master is very ill. Is he feeling pain? What if he leaves? What’s going on?’ So the neophyte disciple becomes fearful and bewildered, and he becomes doubtful. He may have various impure thoughts, even to the point of great offenses. He may even think that he does not want the spiritual master to stay. It seemed again and again that Srila Prabhupada could not live, yet he was being encouraged by his disciples. He would drop lower, then seem to come back. The devotees became more and more absorbed in pleading with Prabhupada to please live, and in that way they were increasing their affection for him.”

*

*

*

Journal and Poems, Volume 1 (January-June 1985)

pp. 150-51

“April 24

“Thoreau writes, ‘My journal is a record of my love.’ In my case, I find it hard to say what I love. I feel mostly love-lacking. While walking at noon, I certainly liked the sight of the Virginia bluebells blooming, but I don't know if that qualifies for love. I am much attached to writing, and I'm attached to living. (Like anyone, I resist death with all of my energies.) But this is not a very clear indication of love. My greatest desire is to cultivate my original love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead under the direction of my spiritual master. But I have been covered for so long by unwholesome habits that this is not so easily attained. So my fear is that within this lifetime I will always fail to love.

“Sometimes I think about the time of death. That time is approaching, but I cannot yet grasp its fearsomeness. Yet, in practical ways, I try to make all arrangements so that I will not fail utterly in the purpose of human life. I am convinced in mind and heart that human life is meant for avoiding the miseries of repeated birth and death, and this is attained through practice of devotional service to Krsna. But I go on in the practice stages, and cannot really say that I love anyone or anything.”

From ***My Dear Lord Krsna, Volume 2***

pp.114-15

Thu, Apr 8 at 4:12 PM

Knowledge

“My dear Lord Krsna . . .

“I pray to get to know You better. When I read in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* of devotees to whom You revealed Yourself, it does not seem possible to follow their example and achieve their success. An outstanding example is Dhruva Maharaj. As a five-year-old boy, he went to the forest seeking You and received instructions from

Narada Muni to chant a devotional mantra and worship the Deity. But Dhruva carried out these instructions with such severe austerities that within six months, he received Your direct darsana. In his purport, Srila Prabhupada assures us that it is not possible in this age to follow the austerities of Dhruva Maharaja. Yet he encourages us to follow the instructions given by our spiritual master. ‘As far as our ISKCON movement is concerned, we simply ask that one observe the four prohibitive rules, chant 16 rounds and simply accept *prasadam* offered to the Lord.’ (*Bhag.* 4.8.72, purport)

“Prabhupada elucidates further:

“It is our duty to always remember that in comparison to Dhruva Maharaja, we are insignificant. We cannot do anything like what Dhruva Maharaja did for self-realization because we are absolutely incompetent to execute such service. But by Lord Caitanya’s mercy, we have been given all concessions possible for this age, so at least we should always remember that neglect of our prescribed duties in devotional service will not make us successful in the mission we have undertaken. It is our duty to follow in the footsteps of Dhruva Maharaja, for he was very determined. We should always be determined to finish our duties in executing devotional service in this life; we should not wait for another life to finish our job.’ (*Bhag.* 4.8.72, purport).

“By this description, Prabhupada makes it seem quite possible to attain You in this lifetime. We must simply be very strict in following the principles. I must, therefore, take heart that if I follow the concessional instruction given by Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada, it is possible to attain You.

“I must have faith in these words and not think that they are impossible or unattainable. I must admit I feel I’m not qualified to attain You in this lifetime. I have deviated from the principles and fallen down. But in the *api cet sudaracaro* verse of the *Bhagavad-gita* (9.30), You give assurance, “Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly, because he’s properly situated in his determination.’ So I may be forgiven for my transgression as long as I steadfastly follow the process and do not deviate again.

“Prabhupada wants us to attain You without delay. The simple process that we have been given is very powerful and can achieve the same results as Dhruva Maharaja’s far more formidable devotional austerities.

“I will be determined to not regard our process as rudimentary or incomplete. I will try harder to chant without offenses and not to be slack in carrying out the four prohibitive principles. Then I can maintain hope of knowing You in the not-far-distant future. This may sound overconfident, but I want to believe in Prabhupada’s words in the Dhruva Maharaja purport and follow them with faith. You can make these words come true if I do my part. We have been given a great concession, and it will bear fruit for the submissive follower. Please help me to carry out Prabhupada’s instructions without deviation. I pray to know You as the result.”

*

*

*

Writing Sessions

Upstate: Room to Write

May 25, 1996 (continued)

“Here is an anecdote from *Moment’s Notice*. It’s about Coleman Hawkins recording ‘Body and Soul’ in 1939. It captures what I feel about not feeling satisfied to stay all the time writing *PMRB*. It tells why I want to turn to writing here. At least it reminds me of what I am going through. The author of the anecdote first tells us other big things going on in the year 1939 (also the year I was born), the beginning of the war, the New York City World’s Fair, etc. And then:

“It’s equally fair to imagine Coleman Hawkins in that crowded year. In October, the Golden Gate Bridge closed down for repairs, while on the eleventh day of that same month, Hawkins, just back from a rewarding stay in war-hungry Europe, repaired to the RCA Victor New York studios with some musical friends and cut ‘Body and Soul’ – just like that, in the shadow of the Empire State Building.

“You can even picture him, slouched in front of one of those weighty old condenser boom mics, surrounded by smoke, suspended and hatted, thinking something like: ‘Well, let’s see how what I’m feeling’s gonna come out sounding this time, so we can easily get this session wrapped up and get back to the gig and really do some blowing.’ After the take he probably remembered how he’d performed this wee hour’s ballad better a hundred times before. ‘I’ll get it down yet,’ he told himself, ‘but this will have to do for now.’ And children, that was that.

“When the record came out, saxophonists all over the world, hearing it and sensing that things would never be the same, started woodshedding Hawkins’ impassioned licks in their closets and on the stand. Why’d he have to go and do that? Of course, everybody fell in love with it. My father would play it, tick it off, play something else then put it back on.’

“But this is my gig, *Upstate*. I barely have the gumption to write in the few hours in between other events and this little life. I will turn to other books. Finished with *Moment’s Notice*, I now nose through *Fifty Days of Solitude*. Okay, I know what no one knows and plenty know what I don’t know. The snows are not here, it’s almost June, it’s the big weekend, kids playing in a nearby field.

“Grumbach in her Maine solitude wants everything as quiet as possible and gets startled by noises of any kind, crows in the feeder, etc. Mail comes telling the miseries of the world, death of friends . . . and she reads books. Doesn’t talk much to people. Good, I like her points. I want to live and write for five days and not be so much with friends here. M. allows me that space. Usually he doesn’t initiate talks.

“But he just told me somewhat sheepishly that he has gone ahead and accepted the invitation to get a computer and be hooked up to it. Of course, it will be a private thing and will not open us to the world of Link, Com., Internet, etc. If that happens, we will just turn the thing back in. Don’t stay connected.

“Spring jing, you are on your own. Krsna is protecting you.

“My writing is by force and discipline still. Meander, get lost, bring yourself back to where you should be.

“I’m also reading *Cc*. sometimes. My spirit is to relax and do what I want. When I read *Cc*. out of this motive, it’s good. Srila Prabhupada writes about being liberated within this material world. It’s a technical science, *iha yasya harer dasye* . . . Bhaktivinoda Thakura considers this *brahma-bhuta* stage in two divisions, *svarupa gata* and *vastu gata*.

“When one has understood Krsna in truth, but is still maintaining some material connection, he is known to be situated in his *svarupa*, his original consciousness. When that original consciousness is completely spiritual it is called

Krsna consciousness. One who lives in such consciousness is actually living in Vrindavan. He may live anywhere; material location doesn't matter.' (*Madhya* 8.131, purport)

“So, I'm clearly not in that *vastu gata* stage. Should I even claim that I'm in the *svarupa gata* stage? No. I think of other things regularly besides Krsna in truth. Prabhupada says, “One is not usually attracted by Krsna in the material world, but as soon as one is liberated from material conditioning, he is naturally attracted.” Clean the heart and it will come.

“11:40 A.M.

“This is my gig. Kids across the street have theirs (little ones in orange shirts). I have so little to convey.

Present

(he blows a whistle to round up the eight-year-olds)

“Did massage and then bathed Srila Prabhupada and put on his newest set of clothes, heavy rough silk. Keeping the world out. Played a CD of ‘Radha-Krsna Temple,’ London, singing in 1970, ‘Hare Krsna Mantra’

“And

“I don't remember when I was so blank. I don't recall the names of people in my class, or when I had a pen that fully satisfied me. I don't remember you or me.

“Yeah, things I prefer not to recall. All those colleges. That art retreat in Italy last summer. I do recall some of it and I recall being with Jayadeva some years ago. But it doesn't seem profitable. Doesn't seem I made the best use of my time when I was trying to figure out what to do, whether to lead a life of prayer. That was daring, I suppose, to contemplate dropping out. I don't dare think that way now. Neither am I attracted to it.

“Got my scene, my niche worked out if I can keep it up – take lots of retreats for writing time but show up at the right times for seminars and temple visits.

“We’ll have to see. But you need faith when you take writing time, that you’ve got a program you like to do.

“Krsna, Krsna, Krsna

and in slow increments he went on, adding to *PMRB* but now smaller and larger timed books kept coming.

His way of expressing.

Can it be?

This is me in my summer suit. This is lunch in Carolina. He’ll let us know of a change in plans. Oh, Hare Krsna, there’s no way around it. Be a good boy. Let words just come along. I remember and don’t.

“Want best behavior of a Vaisnava. Get ready for respectable but human end. But if before then you could do something very helpful for the Krsna consciousness movement, please do. And find ways to come closer to your spiritual master. Some ways like reading his books and you listening – he says they’re all *mudhas* and rascals who don’t accept Krsna. Agitates. It may not be soft language he says. And – if I say this, it may not be favorable. (He called democracy ‘demon-crazy’) but we speak from *sastra*.

“4:09 P.M.

“I don’t remember any special time I fell in love with words, so don’t ask me to remember that. Words. Words. Maybe I had some phony thing. Always pretending to impress people. At a certain stage I tried impressing people that I was intelligent and sensitive. I gave up trying as an athlete. No chance there. Try words. Be a poet. Beat poet. No, no.

“Something else maybe. I can’t recall any really gut strong romance with words. You used them to convey your point. Oh, I remembered some lines from Romantic poets or pop songs.

Maybe pop songs. Pop goes the weasel. Funny little games. We kids had our private meanings for words and it seemed hysterically funny to us. Until the grown-ups snapped you out of it.

“We thought the word Toby, as a name for a boy, depicted a sissy. A toby tie was a necktie unstylishly short. ‘Fot’ was our kid comprehension of one of the first naughty or dirty words to enter our vocabularies.

“Those dirty words still have the power. In Krsna consciousness our speech is purified. The Anglo-Saxon words are stronger. But why join league with the nondevotees?

“I do care about words. But not so much play and lining them up. Words like grass or tree. Any word. Eat. Drink. Take *prasadam*. And when you are shy and stutter a little, that’s magic too. You falter to say a word: ‘L-L-ove Krsna.’

“Oh, we use words over and over and get tired of the same combinations. I am trying to use them (Krsna conscious *siddhanta* words) in a slightly different context, trying to liberate them and free the mind.

“Be fresh.

Words lie when used by liars. They sell “air freshener” in aerosol cans. The whole world becomes false in words.

Hey, momma!

You watch your tongue, sonny. Don’t start spoutin’ those bad words.

Krsna

Krsna

is best

but don’t say it in vain as a cuss word.

‘I wish I had never heard blasphemies but Krsna will help me to forget them and put good words forward, active in His service.

“All words come alive naturally when you turn on the light – as in handwrit automatic words in a list.

“Or telling a dream.

Don't fudge. Pay for the words.

List of some words that occurred to you as revealing the power and magic of words:

1) firecracker, cherry bomb.

2) Pole star. Barbara Pole.

3) Drafted into the Army. Vietnam. 1-A, 4-F, 1-D.

4) Navy, navy, U.S. Navy. Short-timer.

5) Sensitive soul poet. Rilke, Sandesh.

Explode.

Rage, rage, against the dying of the night.

Kirtana, the death of the cult.

The apostate.

The jury rigged.

The mobster knifed.

The thugs entered,

Punched

Broke face

gouged eyes – violence and torture words are hurtful. You want to avoid them. Words hurt, blasphemies, threats of violence, when I hear thugs use low words I cringe. Especially mocking words against devotees as from a passing car or hurled at the temple or when on *sankirtana*.

‘Commies! Bald heads. Skirts.’

“Skinheads, bikers, tough guys, gangs, knives, coming to get us. Break-in. Felony.

“What's in a word? ‘Nrsimha!’ Chant Hare Krsna.

“Exercise: write the worst stuff you can muster and then throw it in the trash along with your sense of failure.

“I don’t like to do that. It all maybe get lost anyway. Yeah, I like to save what I write. I don’t get heart failure if it gets lost buy why deliberately throw it out?”

“Okay, here’s bad stuff:

“The mortal element in prose is that the worst guys, the demons, have to be eliminated. Let’s beat the hell out of them and take their money. Women are less intelligent. Devotees who don’t distribute books are wimps. GBC men are the best devotees.

“Oh, you are so good at writing you don’t know how to write bad?”

“I didn’t say that. I just say that I don’t need this is exercise to “write junk and throw it away along with your concept of failure.” I know we can’t fail when we are trying to serve Krsna.

“I was once a poet,’ said Montage.

“Oh, you are still,’ said Sally McDally. And they held hands on the rampart overlooking the Saratoga Spa Stadium. They were supposed to be selling stickers to support the Amherst preaching center. But now they were in love. True love.

“I am not able to write bad because I am such a good boy. I’m so clean my navel has no lint. I got all A’s on the essays. I never had a bad thought. I work hard for my guru and fall at his feet. On his Vyasa-puja day I gave \$108 and he patted me on the head. The money went to the BBT.

“Envious skunk.

Died and his skull stayed around on the earth. Gave orders to burn it. Keep it as an ashtray.

Now we are getting somewhere. Write junk a-lunk. Too long and boring dogma – dog and Ma.

“Ramananda Raya explained to Lord Caitanya that the summit of transcendental life is the conjugal love of Radha and Krsna. He sings songs of *Prema vivarta vilasa*. Lord Caitanya stopped the mouth of Ramananda Raya with His hand because the talks are confidential and should only be heard by pure-hearted devotees (not *prakṛta-sahajiyas* or materialist scholars).

Next, Ramananda Raya explains the means of approaching the Divine Couple, which is to follow in the footsteps of the *gopis* (*sakhi bhava*). All of this is translated and commented on by Srila Prabhupada.

“Now, take rest and see you tomorrow after you do your first stint with *PMRB*. Saratoga was a scene of battles in the Revolutionary War. America defeated Britain in two crucial battles here in the autumn of 1777. Much later, Ulysses S. Grant stayed in a cabin and wrote his memoirs shortly before his death in 1885. Not much has happened since then of that sort. Now there are spas, natural waters, geysers, the parks, performing arts, museums for horse racing, etc.

“Saratoga. What about the ship, the USS Saratoga? I used to give lectures to sailors newly-arrived on the Sara CVA-60. She’s dead now. The soul never dies. It changes from body to another.”