

## ***Free Write Journal #143***

**May 14, 2021**

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### **Free Writes**

#### **Pankajanghri**

I received a short note from my disciple Ramila, who was very close to the departed Pankajanghri. She wrote that she was preparing to write a substantial letter to me, but now she is occupied with quietly processing her grief. Like so many devotees in ISKCON, she very much looked up to and was inspired by the twins at Mayapur. I will tell her not to interrupt her grief because it is natural and necessary. We are assured that Pankajanghri is in a blissful next life because of his selfless service to the Deities in Mayapur. But we who survive him are very unhappy in his absence. One of the Vaisnava *kavis* wrote a poem, “To the Departed Vaisnavas” and expressed his sadness by saying he would crash his head against a stone and enter fire. We cannot tell the survivors not to mourn. They need their time. But eventually Ramila will recover and will write to me again.

#### **Srila Prabhupada on the Orbital Movements of the Planets**

In the newsletter “Srila Prabhupada Today” it is reported that Prabhupada, in May 1975, was staying in Perth, Australia, and at this time he had been translating the Fifth Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* regarding the structure of the universe and the movements of the planets. On his morning walks, he would have mock-debates with his disciples, who posed as materialistic

scientists. One day he said the different planetary orbits were all independent, and that the so-called “law of gravity” was not mentioned in the Vedic literature. This provoked some of his disciples into asking challenging questions. Prabhupada replied, “We are not so interested in these details. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is just a very short summary to give some idea of the creation of the Lord. But it is not scientific. We are not interested in science; we are interested in developing our love of God.” He went on to say that if this were to be scientific, it would take volumes to explore how the creation is done. But this was not Sukadeva Gosvami’s purpose in speaking, to explain the creation. He just wants us to understand, “Krsna has created everything. Develop love of Krsna.” If you can’t understand it, you accept it because it is there in the scriptures. We do not bother our minds trying to understand how it could be like this. We just want to develop love of God.

### **Lord Caitanya’s Civil Disobedience Act**

I have been listening to a reading of *Caitanya-bhagavata* by Vrndavana dasa Thakura. Lord Caitanya goes with thousands and thousands of Vaisnavas carrying torches and enacting a civil disobedience act. The Kazi is frightened and hides in his house. Caitanya Mahaprabhu has a talk with the Kazi and convinces him to allow *sankirtana* to go on freely in Navadvipa.

### **King Puranjana Becomes a Woman in His Next Life**

Because of his long years of sense gratification, King Puranjana grew old and weak. His wife and relatives neglected him. But he remained attached to his wife up until the end. As a result, he had to take the body of a woman in his next life. Because of his good pious deeds, Puranjana was born as the daughter of King Vidarbha and was named Vidarbhi. Vidarbhi became married to a powerful king named Malayadhvaja, and their union produced a daughter and seven sons who became rulers of the tract of land known as Dravida. The kings’ many sons became preachers and

spread the cult of *bhakti* all over the world. Prabhupada writes in his purport that he has now many grown up disciples who are preachers, and they can take the preaching into their own hands. In this way the spiritual master can sit down and practice *nirjana-bhajana*, writing books in Krsna consciousness. But *nirjana-bhajana* should not be undertaken by a neophyte devotee.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura wrote a song, “*Dusta mana! Tumi kiserai vaisnava?*” He addressed his mind and said, “What kind of a Vaisnava are you? Simply for cheap adoration, you sit in a solitary place and pretend to chant Hare Krsna. But this is all cheating.”

### ***Bhagavad-gita***

I heard B.B. Govinda Maharaja speaking from the Seventh Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*. He told an incident of a man who came from India trying to raise money for his ashram. But everywhere he went he was turned away. He was dressed like a *sadhu* and had a white beard and long white hair. He came to the devotees’ temple and begged shelter there, since he had nowhere to stay. B.B. Govinda Maharaja thought of the custom that a stranger should be treated as God and allowed accommodation in your house. So they said he could stay there for a few days. But the young devotees in the temple began to “attack” the stranger when he spoke his materialistic conceptions of Krsna. The man begged B.B. Govinda Maharaja to get the young devotees to stop attacking him, but Maharaja just smiled. He said these young devotees were like Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu and were irrepressible warriors in the cause of Krsna. The man begged Maharaja to get the devotees to stop attacking him, and he complied. But when Maharaja inquired from him about Krsna, the man said that when Krsna descends, both He and all His associates take temporary material forms. Hearing this, Maharaja became like a grown-up Abhimanyu and fiercely argued with the man. The man then packed his bags and left the temple.

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I heard a *Gita* class by Bhurijana Prabhu. He said that Arjuna feared killing his close relatives in the battle, but he did not know that the slayer kills not because the soul in each person is eternal. It is said that all the soldiers on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra were liberated because they saw Krsna at the time of their death. Arjuna should put aside his hesitations and fight because he was a *ksatriya*. Moreover, all the Kuru soldiers would die because Krsna had already killed them, and it was up to Arjuna to take the credit by fighting.

## Local News

Ishvara Govinda, from Rochester, has been here several days. He has been making a film, “A Day in the Life of Satsvarupa Maharaja.” He has completed it, and the inmates in the ashram have seen it, approved it and praised it. It begins with the title, “2:00 A.M.” and shows the outside of the house, where it is dark and raining. Suddenly two lights are turned on from within the house, and this means I have awakened and am getting ready for the start of my day. The footage shows me chanting *japa* on my beads, Baladeva speaks as my “personal assistant” and tells of the etiquette of serving intimately with the spiritual master. The film then shows the time “4:00 A.M.” with me speaking into the Dictaphone after chanting sixteen rounds and composing for my *Free Write Journal*. This goes on until it’s time for breakfast. The breakfast is cereal, fruits and powdered pistachio nuts. I am filmed going to a morning doctor’s appointment. One can see how lame I am and how I need much assistance in getting from a wheelchair into the car. Meanwhile, the day’s lunch is prepared: *iddlis* with *sambar* and coconut chutney, a traditional combination. I say the *prasadam* prayer in English translation, and we begin to honor the *prasadam*. Later, Krsna-dasi is shown dressing the Deities and ornamenting the altars with lilacs, carnations and garlands made from lilies of the valley, which are very aromatic. I am shown in the afternoon sitting silently and receiving *darsana* up close of Radha-Govinda. I do this for a considerable amount of time. At 7:00 PM the lights go out, and I begin to take rest for the night, with background music provided by

Jahnvi Harrison and Gaura Vani. We congratulated Ishvara on a job well done.

At 4:00 P.M yesterday, Baladeva went on Zoom and spoke his colorful memories of doing interviews all over the world for the *Prabhupada-lilamrta*. He spoke for an hour and a half and took questions and gave answers. The devotees were very appreciative and interested to hear all his adventures, which were new to them and an inside look at the production of the *Lilamrta*.

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Ishvara Govinda gave me drawings done by his children, the eldest daughter (age seven) and the younger son Damodara. I liked the drawings very much. It struck me that if we're going to do primitive drawings, let us see the original drawings of children themselves. They have a disarming originality to them. I then did a drawing of Ishvara's whole family to present to them when he goes back. I did the father, mother and three children in respective sizes. At the bottom I drew a picture of myself (holding a pen) and Baladeva, with his arms upraised.

Ishvara showed me a video where his oldest daughter Lalita and the younger boy Damodara are engaged in their nightly ritual, which is to chant some rounds of *japa*. Their chanting was not "kiddie *japa*" or posing for the video. It was deep, serious, meditative chanting. They held the beads through their fingers, outside of the bead bag. They looked very precocious chanting at such a young age.

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Ishvara Govinda left yesterday after a week. He was enthusiastic about the short film he made of me and my typical day (taking medicines upon waking, chanting my beads and bringing the mind under control, etc.), and he was enlivened by the 1,100 hits it had received. He's planning on working on other film projects, and also has plans to recover all my lectures going back to the

1970s. He will put them in new format and make them accessible to the devotees. I'm very pleased with this project.

## **Roses**

Baladeva spent a lot to purchase David Austin-bred roses. Their outstanding quality is that they are very fragrant. We paid to get these flowers because they are for offerings to the Deities. It is not first-class to offer flowers to the Lord that have no scent.

These fragrant roses are rarely found on the market here. The most exclusive nursery only ordered one hundred, and of those we took ten. Prabhupada has commented critically on trees that bear no fruits and flowers that have no fragrance. Our ashram begins at the borders of the property. It's one thing to have the jewellike Deities in a ramshackle house, but it's much better if the whole property is planted with fruits and flowers that can be offered. Our hyacinths have finished blooming, but now we have lilacs and lilies of the valley. With their sweet fragrance, they can be smelled from a distance.

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We also received a donation for a bed of roses for our garden. The donated roses have a strong, sweet aroma, which is rare. In addition, we went out shopping specifically before Mother's Day to get the best flowers, because after Mother's Day they are all bought out. We got a variety of flowers that bloom over different times in the summer. This pleases the *pujaris* because they have a wide variety of flowers to offer the Deities. Radha-Govinda have been receiving lilies-of-the-valley garlands, and Gaura-Nitai get carnations and roses which Muktavandya brings from Boston. (The roses that Muktavandya brings us from the Boston market have no traditional rose smell. This is the case with most florists. The roses look beautiful, but they don't smell nicely.) We would like to expand our varieties of flowers for the Deities, but we have a shortage of manpower for weeding and watering. At least we have a wide variety of marigolds in different colors, which

provide a base for decoration on the altars onto which go our rarer flowers. It takes a lot of flowers to keep up our standard because we change the flowers on our altars every day. The mixture of flowers also supplies a variety of aromas on a daily basis. There are many references in the scriptures to the importance of offering flowers to the *arca-vigraha*, and we feel the Deities are pleased with our offering. Krsna Himself states that He is pleased by the offering of simple wildflowers by His beloved *gopis*.

## **Right Wing**

I have a devotee friend who's alarmed by what he says is a large number of devotees who subscribe to right wing propaganda: Trump supporters, white supremacists, conspiracy theories, anti-vaccine, claiming Prabhupada liked Hitler, racists, woman-haters, and all kinds of outlandish beliefs. I can't relate to it so much except to hear him and sympathize that these devotees are doing harm to our movement by aligning themselves with the right wing and doing it in the name of Prabhupada. My friend is afraid to associate with devotees unless he knows their opinions on these matters. He doesn't feel safe anymore in the ISKCON movement and is discouraged that the leaders aren't speaking out against the right wing propagandists.

## **A Prodigal Disciple**

I received a letter from a disciple who hadn't written me in decades. She introduced herself as "a prodigal daughter" who was hesitatingly coming back to Krsna consciousness. She said she left the movement as a rebellious teenager and entered the dark night of the soul. She got help from psychotherapists and took up psychotherapy counseling on her own. She has only fond memories of me and recalled the favorable instructions I gave her to be true to herself and to seek out the truth. Now she has been humbled by life in the world.

I received the letter from the "prodigal disciple" with joy and offered to send her some of my

recent books and to keep up correspondence with me. I have received a few letters from prodigal disciples, long-lost children, and it warms my heart. It makes me think, “It’s never too late,” and that the original bonds of obedience and love have survived the broken hearts and broken vows.

## **All the Answers?**

I received a letter from another disciple who hasn’t written to me in many years. She said she has no questions for me because all the answers are in Prabhupada’s books and my books. I didn’t think this was the right attitude. As long as I am alive they should write to me and give me updates on their activities and inquire from me about their spiritual lives. They should allow me to encourage them to practice their *sadhana*. And are they actually reading Prabhupada’s books and my books? Or are the books just sitting comfortably on the shelf with an occasional dusting, and the devotee claims, “All the answers are there”? Anyway, the exchange of correspondence is a special, personal thing, and it should be kept up to keep the relationship alive.

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From ***Every Day, Just Write: Volume 3***

### ***A Sojourn in Tapo-bhumi***

pp. 366-67

“I have a stiff neck and head. Take rest early. I can’t do a sixty-four-round *vrata* because of my headaches. It’s too strenuous to chant for nine hours a day.

“I thought of practicing meditation to help my chanting.’

“Yes,’ I say and glance at Nanyana-kavaca. ‘Remember how Mahakrama used to read books on *astanga-yoga* to improve his concentration on *japa*?’ Someone else says, ‘The answer is earplugs.’

“How do you get around the wall?”

“Associate with good chanters.’

“Where do you find them?”

“Pay attention to the *japa* genius within you, the *japa* reformer. If you give him room, he will awaken and reciprocate.

**“CHANGING MIND”**

“Change mind twice a day—

are you

going to Vrndavana or the Caribbean?

Oh, go change your diapers,

your mind, your seat, your

college major.

Each year you change your musical

tastes, but not your God

or guru.

**“5:45 P.M.**

“Madhu just came in with revised travel suggestions. Seems all of us are getting itchy feet at the same time, ready to leave our Puri conference. It was nice together, but now it seems the mood has passed. If we can catch a plane, we’re going to leave the day after tomorrow for Bhubaneshwar.

**“January 16**

**12:12 A.M.**

“Yesterday was warmer, so more small mosquitoes are flying about, eager to bite me. Saw a dog yesterday suddenly flop on its back and roll in the sand in an effort to rub out some bug that was biting it. This world. Flea eat dog.

“What’s the value of unconscious over conscious writing?

“See imprints on the page of handwriting from the previous page ... ancient, uncoded marks ... a few paper clips, the desk space limited as my books, papers, and Jagannatha stickers encroach upon it, leaving me a small area for the notepad.

“Registering complaints, aliases, alases,  
 laments, complaints,  
 bitch dog and male dog,  
 you saw the dogs and were impressed  
 by their behavior. It’s typical.  
 Words come out. I want  
 something new or enduring.

“I want to be left alone. Life is tough. We each have to contribute something. Be a little confident, determined, tolerant, accepting of your limits, doing what you can. I’m just so limited.

“Put things out of your mind (like mosquitoes) that you can’t handle right now—decisions, or world’s horrors, or solutions or lack of solutions for ISKCON, the unsolaced, traumatic past—that stuff.

“Also, why you don’t have more taste, who can teach you, who can deliver you. My master did all he could. Now I have to carry my weight across the desert.”

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**“January 19**

**3:30 A.M., NEW DELHI**

“Sharp headache behind right eye on plane yesterday. Lay down in back of car through the chaotic New Delhi traffic. Our driver said the bus drivers in Delhi cause most of the car accidents. Ninety-nine percent of the bus drivers come from the villages, don’t have licenses, and don’t know any traffic rules—or even how to drive.

“We arrived at Trikalajna Prabhu’s flat, and although the room was cold and the street noisy, I lay down under the heavy quilt and the sharp ache gradually subsided. Now it’s the morning of another day. I’m hoping I’ll be able to lecture in the temple this morning and then move on to Vrndavana.

“This morning at the apartment in Delhi I received a phone call from a GBC man. He wanted me to give judgment regarding a controversy. It is not a role I usually like to take. The controversy troubled me all morning, and it was on my mind as I tried to chant on the way to Vrndavana. This ruined my approach to Vrndavana. The day was also cold and rainy. We saw many car and truck wrecks along the road. Our taxi was a new one, not even a year old, but the windshield wipers didn’t work. The driver had to keep reaching out his side window with a rag to rub off a small portion of the windshield so he could see. Somehow or other we made it without incident.

“Outside the Guesthouse I took a couple of steps out of the taxi and prostrated myself in the sand. I felt the earth touch the different parts of my body, and I rubbed sand between my fingers. I thought, ‘This is it. This is the place where I’ll want to be at the end. Life will be grit then, like this sand.’

“Now we’ve been here a few hours, but I don’t feel like I’m in Vrndavana yet. I don’t have anything to say to people, although Madhu wants me to meet with the

devotees at 4 P.M. to say hello. I can't honestly say to them that I've come to Vrndavana to try to find what Krsna wants me to do or that I want to enter the Vraja mood. Not yet. Our entry is a flurry of looking for things we'll need while we're here—a desk lamp, etc. I've been struggling to come out of the slough of a headache, and I'm looking for steadiness.

**“5 P.M.**

“Head cleared, then spoke for over an hour to disciples. Told them, ‘Be truthful.’ Ranged over subjects. Tried my best. Said, ‘Be happy in Vrndavana.’ Boasted a little. But head clear of pain.

“Got desk lamp, scrounged memories, heard dogs bark, free-wrote in sacred land protected by amenities, prayed, ‘Krsna, please make me truthful—but not too painfully.’”

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pp.387-88

**“January 20, 12:40 A.M.**

“I wake thinking I ought to read of Krsna and the *gopis* since I'm in Vrndavana. That's okay. But don't think other topics are not nourishing or inspiring. Reading of Krsna as a baby in Vrndavana is also good and leads you to becoming eligible for appreciating the son of Maharaja Nanda in the *rasa* dance. How can I think I am eligible to hear of Krsna's topmost pastimes? Rest assured that when reading and hearing Srila Prabhupada's lectures, you are preparing yourself for the highest Krsna consciousness, and a stay in Vrndavana will impel this.

“If someone takes advantage of hearing the pastimes of the Lord, the material contamination of dust, accumulated in the heart due to long association with material nature, can be immediately cleansed. Lord Caitanya also instructed that simply by hearing the transcendental name of Lord Krsna one can cleanse the heart of all material contamination. There are different processes for self-realization, but this process of devotional service—of which hearing is the most important function—when adopted by any conditioned soul, will automatically cleanse him of the material contamination and enable him to realize his real constitutional position. Conditional life is due to this contamination only, and as soon as it is cleared off, then naturally the dormant function of the living entity—rendering service to the Lord—awakens. . . . This Krsna treatise is meant for that purpose, and the reader may take advantage of it to attain the ultimate goal of human life.’

—*Krsna* Book, Chapter 7

“Note the phrase, ‘The dormant function of rendering service to the Lord . . . awakens.’ As unconscious material desires are dormant in the self and come out in dreams and other expressions creating ‘wholeness’ and ‘balance,’ even deeper than that is the unconscious (covered) spiritual nature of the self as pure soul. It’s uncovered not simply by letting go in drawing or writing, etc., but by hearing from a higher source. That higher source, (*sastra*, guru) appears to be something outside our self, but actually it touches off the inherent nature of the soul. The constitutional relationship between God and the soul is objective reality, but covered. Self-

improvement must come to this stage. Working alone with the self in the world is not enough. The ordinary psychologist can only bring you to a certain stage of improvement and awareness, say, from the modes of ignorance and passion up to goodness. Even then it's only God's mercy that keeps us alive. The real mercy descends from the spiritual world to clean us and awaken our spiritual nature—and grant us love of God (*hladini-sakti*). Don't think it is merely 'religious,' or blind faith in dogma.”

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pp.389-90

**“January 21****MIDNIGHT**

“Yesterday was a bad pain day for me, although everything is good by Krsna's will. I went to *mangala-arati* in Prabhupada's Samadhi bundled up in layers of clothes, including my shiny silver coat. It proved to be too much clothing. The air wasn't as frigid as I had expected it to be. I realize now that my worry about the temperature was partly due to last year's visit, when Madhu and I were so depleted after returning from the Naturopath clinic.

“Then I confidently led the singing. After a few moments I became nervous that I might forget the words, so I meditated on my own Prabhupada *murti*, to whom I sing this song every day. Still, my knees shook at the surrender it required to sing the song without worrying about how I was about to forget the words. To those who heard me, I didn't miss a word and the singing was all right, but no one saw what was going on inside. Then Purusatraya Maharaja, who lives in Vrndavana, welcomed me with a few formal words after the *arati*.

“Then we went into the temple room for the Deities' *arati*. I was astonished and pleased at the new painting over Srila Prabhupada's *vyasasana*. It depicts Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami sitting under a tree. One of them is composing Sanskrit verses with a pen, and the other is glancing at him with a sidelong glance. Radha and Krsna and various *gopis* appear in the tree. The artistry of this painting is nice, and it held my attention. It makes Prabhupada look extra-appealing in that setting. We went through the usual stopping before the three altars. Although it was the first time I have seen the Deities here this year, and my concentration wasn't so deep, I felt the sweetness of being in Vrndavana.

“Yesterday was the day the devotee to whom I'm supposed to talk was to arrive in Vrndavana. I wanted to keep my day clear for him, but he never arrived. By 10 A.M. a headache started to build, and it became pain behind the right eye. It increased and I couldn't do any work. By 3:30 P.M. I went to bed and bolted the door. The headache didn't stop until 10 or 10:30 P.M.

“Vrndavana is out there and also  
in this room  
as much as I can comprehend.

“I'm in Vrndavana with body aches and Indian long underwear with no elastic at the ankles or waist, room enough for a big belly and only two straps to make it fit my size. I get annoyed with the constant Indian deficiencies—a bathroom with weak lights so you can't see if your *tilaka* is on straight, cars that overturn, 'No Berm available.' What the hell is this?

“Another thing about the Indian mentality: they don't shoot straight; they're polite but not cooperative. They're also pious and know Krsna, and I don't.”

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pp.391-92

“I hope I attain attachment, love for Krsna, but if I don’t, I hope I can at least keep exposing the truth of myself.

“I hope to keep strong in my commitment not to be manipulated by others. GBC committees, etc., have their work to do, and I’m glad they’re protecting ISKCON, but I have a different mission. My role is not to judge relative issues. I’m not a politician. Going my way.

**“8:30 A.M.**

“To do in Vrndavana:

“(1) Sit in this room.

“(2) Pride myself on how I was strong not to be manipulated. I call it ‘aggressively neutral.’

“(3) Thank Madhu and all those who take care of me.

“(4) Tell the cooks I want small pieces of ginger, soft *capatis*, not so much cereal. Do I dare ask for papayas with the porridge?

“(5) Think of how this is the land of *radha-rasa*.

“(6) Ask for a gossip report.

“(7) Read *Vidagdha-madhava*.

“(8) Write an alpha poem on the word ‘mug.’

(Mug would be okay for putting pens in

unless you mean ‘face’ mug—

God-awful wind and fog.)

“(9) Write an alpha poem on ‘Sorry:’

Sorry I left you alone didn’t open up,  
 didn’t do a dirty-good turn for a friend and  
 really break rules in  
 your favor. So when it’s my  
 turn I’ll  
 turn to Krsna only and  
 say, ‘I did wrong, I admit, I admit.  
 Now do your worst.’

“(10) Think about the meaning of cover-up.

“(11) Don’t cooperate with hanky-panky.

“(12) Turn mind away from pornography models that come back specifically  
 from magazines of past.

“(13) Fight for my life.

“(14) Say, ‘My disease is not malignant’ as if I’ll live forever.

“(15) Look out window of this room I never leave and see only fog.

“(16) Don’t attend *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class two days in a row and hope I  
 don’t get caught, tarred, and feathered.

“(17) I can get thrown out or get in trouble in ISKCON as I could in the Navy.

“(18) What about Govardhana-*sila*? Or a special little rock to sit beside Srila  
 Prabhupada *murti*. A piece of Vrndavana to take with me. I could do that with some  
 Vraja sand.

“(19) I could sail clear. No storms. He was polite, I was polite—both  
 superficial.

“(20) Hey man, what’s the latest?

“(21) Read it and weep. My eyes can see, but my mind refuses to read *Krsna* book. Whaddya want? Higher *rasas*? No, no . . .

“(22) No mice, only a few monkeys I saw climbing on Samadhi Mandir dome.

“(23) Get out and meet the people. I will, I will.”

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pp.387-88

**“January 22**

**12:20 A.M.**

“Saw the art place of Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu and the team of forty devotees, mostly Russians, who work with him. Splendid place. Area of several acres, walled in, a temple in Vrndavana near Madana-mohana temple. They work there at art day and night. He is the master of the new devotees coming to paint *krsna*- and *caitanya-lila*, and who work on sculptures, all for the museum at the New Delhi temple. What can I learn from it? Can I ever work like that with artists? I don’t think so. I write alone. And give out my books. I don’t train others to write diaries or free-write poems. I myself have to agonize whether it’s right or wrong, so how can I tell others that they should do it? We would be inundated with bad poetry and other outpourings. Rather, I see myself as teaching not writing but honesty, self-searching. If some keep a diary, that's their business.

“Meetings each day. The little knot of a twinge is always ready to go off behind the right eye. Cat and mouse game. The editor is taking out references to my illness in a book I wrote because people won’t be interested in my condition. They want to hear the notes I kept while reading *Caitanya-caritamrta*, but what about the human element that I struggled? Aches and pains don’t belong in a book.

“I asked Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu where he and his artists get their ideas. He said they paint out of their own heads and hearts; they don't use models, and I presume they don't study Western artists. He did mention Rodin in our conversation.

“Large rat running across Radha-Krsna’s altar at Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu’s art compound.

“Each day I try to fulfill a schedule, but it all depends on whether I get a headache. Too many references to headaches bores readers. I don't mind. What I'm writing is a medical record as much as a record of everything else. Why leave out the pain?

“Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu got brain malaria, which he said is like having twenty malarias at once. People die from it. Yet while the pain was great, he dragged himself from bed and continued drawing. These drawings are later used as models for sculptures. As soon as he drew one picture, he said the pain went away. He spoke of miraculous results.

“Artists who have never painted before do their first painting and it comes out beautifully. It's inconceivable. He said there is a group energy which brings out wonderful images in the paintings and sculptures that had never before appeared in his work. It happens automatically by working in Vrndavana on this project. He’s positive.

“Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhu has been an artist for forty-five years, and now he’s writing a book on how to do it. He's writing several other books at the same time. I asked him, ‘Do you sleep and eat?’

“He smiled, ‘Not much.’ In a flow of continual creativity. He has worked hard to reach this stage. He showed me two painted panels that formerly took him six

months to complete. Now he can do a bunch of them in a week. He has learned how to increase, how to be more in touch with Krsna, and so on.

“I come back to my little scribblings. How can I presume to be an artist? This morning I drew three little doodles of tigers, like the tigers I saw in a dream last night. I was pleased with my doodles. I’m not trying to train myself to become a realistic artist. Rather, I am interested in primitive art, some way to make them come honestly from my hand.

“What’s the purpose of tapping your unconscious if you’re a conditioned soul? Isn’t that what the critics ask? They want to know why we should pretend to be spiritual masters if actually we’re conditioned. You admit it in your books, don’t you? We constantly have to refine and redefine our positions.”

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From ***Truthfulness: The Last Leg of Religion***

pp.25-27

### **“Honesty and Lying**

“The confessional approach to honesty is effective when done sincerely. Admitting our wrongs and feeling sorry for our sins must be accompanied by determined efforts at reform. Confession is mentioned in *The Nectar of Devotion* under the headings *samprarthanatmika*, ‘very feelingly offering prayers,’ and *dainyavodhika*, ‘humbly submitting oneself.’ A prayer from *Padma Purana* exemplifies submission in humbleness:

“My dear Lord, there is no sinful living entity who is more of a sinner than myself. . . . I am so greatly sinful and offensive that when I come to confess my sinful activities before You, I am ashamed.’

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 81

“Prabhupada writes that this attitude is natural for a devotee. ‘It is no wonder that a devotee has sinful activities in his past life, and this should be admitted and confessed before the Lord.’ The Lord is happy to forgive the sincere devotee for his offenses.

“But that does not mean that one should take advantage of the Lord’s causeless mercy and expect to be excused over and over again while he commits the same sinful activities. Such mentality is only for shameless persons. . . . Someone may think, “For a whole week I may commit sinful activities, and for one day I will go to the temple or church and admit my sinful activities so that I can become washed off and again begin my sinning.” This is most nonsensical and offensive and is not acceptable to the author of *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*.’

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 82

“Feelingly offering prayers to the Lord, and submitting oneself to Him, is always beneficial. But it should not be seen as a substitute for avoidance of sin. For example, when a devotee becomes initiated by the spiritual master, he vows to avoid four kinds of sinful activities and to chant Hare Krsna at least two hours daily. By keeping these vows we attest to our sincerity. Even if a devotee does follow the rules and regulations he may confess that he has not developed any genuine devotion or taste for the holy name. And so he laments as he makes an honest self-assessment.”

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From ***Journal and Poems, Book 1***

pp.106-7

“In my writing I want to be honest and admit my failures. But I also want to help others in Krsna consciousness. The scriptures state that one should not speak of the previous life of a Vaisnava or attempt to know his mind. With senses and mind controlled, we push on in spiritual life and represent our spiritual master.

“In court, judges and juries have difficulty assessing the actions of a devotee because they do not know his inner motives. Nowadays people don’t even know why one should refrain from illicit sex life or meat-eating, and they especially do not appreciate the devotee’s absolute obedience to his spiritual master. Neither can a psychoanalyst understand our thoughts and actions (unless he is himself a devotee). So just as we avoid the psychoanalyst’s couch, we should also avoid indulging in confessions.

“Confess what? I have already confessed that I was a fallen fool until I met His Divine Grace. Since then, I have been hanging onto his *dhoti* cloth and praying to remain faithful and not to deviate. I have my shortcomings, but by Krsna's grace I am still his man.

“When challenged as to whether he was a great devotee, Prabhupada would sometimes say to the challenger,

“That you should judge for yourself. We are repeating the message of Krsna and we are following the rules and regulations. That much we are doing. As to whether or not we fail or what degree of holiness we attain, that you can judge for yourself. Krsna is also seeing and judging, but He is not obliged to you.’

“So there is a limit to the benefit or need of disclosures of private life.”

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From ***Here Is Srila Prabhupada***

pp.57-58

“From a psychology book: ‘There is universal agreement that the amount of affection in infancy determines, more than any other influence, the whole course and quality of a human life.’ Maybe I didn’t do well on this account with my Irish-American mother who tended not to be too physical. But in my spiritual birth, I received much affection—real affection—from Swamiji.

“Thousands of devotees who never had much personal exchange with Prabhupada felt relief when, after his disappearance, there were no more secretaries to keep them out of his rooms or presence. Whoever wanted to could go into his room in Vrndavana or in Los Angeles, or go before his *murti* in any temple in the world, and just sit with him as disciple to guru, as friend to friend. I feel that way too.

“We can’t judge those days of protecting Prabhupada’s time too harshly though. ISKCON was bound to grow into an institution where we could no longer eat lunch with Prabhupada. It’s not anyone’s fault; it was Prabhupada’s desire to preach that created the institution. But I’m glad I knew Prabhupada in those days before ISKCON grew so large. I’m also glad I was able to grow up with Prabhupada, from my youthful, naive, uncomplicated freshness in the beginning, to acceptance of service in separation.

“Only when the child knows that he is loved can he get that necessary truth about himself, that he is lovable. And only when he really believes that he is lovable will he then anticipate and expect

friendliness and love from others during the course of his life.’ (From a book on psychology).”

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From ***Prabhupada Appreciation***

pp. 149-50

“After the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada in 1977, devotees began to realize real service in separation. Although they had always heard his instructions on serving the *vani* of the spiritual master, they never had to apply it with the same reality as after Srila Prabhupada’s departure. When he left, the devotees could see that Srila Prabhupada was still very much present in the movement, and that he had given himself to them in the most tangible way. And because of this realization, they were able to sustain their spiritual lives. Those who did not learn this art of *vipralambha-seva*, who knew only the *vapuh*, fell away.

“Sometimes devotees say that in serving Srila Prabhupada in separation, something is missing, namely, his ability to personally correct us. We have made so many mistakes as a movement and individually, mistakes we may not have made if Prabhupada were personally present to guide us.

“There are different ways to look at this doubt, and one of those ways is to see things over time. When Prabhupada was present among us, devotees made mistakes, but because of his physical presence, rectification was immediate. He’s not somewhere on the other side of the room or the country or even the world; he has taken his seat in the heart of his sincere devotees. Even though he is so close for consultation, there is an art to hearing his counsel. Prabhupada said that “intelligence is the form-direction of Supersoul,“ and as we develop our spiritual

intelligence more and more we will begin to learn how to accept directions Srila Prabhupada is giving from within the heart. As long as we are wavering on the mental platform, which means vacillating between remembrance of Krsna and forgetfulness of Him, we will not be able to hear clearly what Srila Prabhupada is saying, nor feel for certain his pleasure or displeasure. There is nothing lacking in the principle of service and separation, we are only lacking in our ability to perform it purely.”

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

pp.33-35

“Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But the same attachment, when directed toward self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.’

—*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.25.20

“We have all been very fortunate, after millions and millions of lifetimes in this material world, to get the association of a great *sadhu*, a *maha-bhagavata*, Srila Prabhupada.

“We are very fortunate persons. Now Srila Prabhupada has departed from this material world, but that does not mean that our attachment has departed. Ordinarily, when a man dies, his wife observes a little mourning and then looks for another husband for sense gratification. In fact, society encourages this. But in our case, it is not that the spiritual master dies or that our relationship with him dies or

that our attachment to him dies. And it is not that because the disciple is still alive, he has to become attached to another guru. Rather, the one guru who gave us Krsna consciousness is still with us. On the title page of his *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Srila Prabhupada has written, ‘Dedicated to my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja. He lives forever by his divine instructions, and the follower lives with him.’ So that's what we have been discussing—how to become more attached to Prabhupada.

“Understanding his disappearance is a way for us to increase our attachment. Now, after his recent departure, we are taking to various ways of remembering Srila Prabhupada. Devotees are worshiping a *murti* of Prabhupada, hearing his tapes more often and more carefully, trying to surround themselves with all semblances of his personal presence, and trying to understand that his instructions must be followed very carefully. Any way you can, increase your attachment for Srila Prabhupada. This is our motive in reading relevant verses in these classes and trying to understand Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance according to the scriptures.”

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From ***Passing Places, Eternal Truths: Travel Writings 1988-1996***

pp.224-25

***“Jagannatha Bliss”***

“Jagannatha is checked in to room 903.

How can the Lord

of the universe

be a Sheraton guest?

Because He consents.

First thing to do  
is make up His altar—  
today He's in yellow,  
Subhadra red, Balarama blue.  
And I'm collapsed beside Them.  
Travel is exciting  
if you choose as your companion  
the best friend, enjoyer,  
the ruler of all.  
Nothing else really matters—  
jets, buses, oceans,  
the enormous world of nondevotion  
that's all illusion.  
But He is the center,  
and I am His servant.  
That's all that matters:  
surrender.  
O Lord Jagannatha,  
please save me,  
please keep me,  
take me home.  
Keep me traveling.  
Keep me sick.  
Make me well.  
Whatever You want.

Keep Your name on my mind.”

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From *The Wild Garden*

pp.133-34

**“Other Places**

“‘Hurry up, please. It's time.’ The famous T. S. Eliot line. Or the hare in Alice in Wonderland. He is running along with a clock in his hand, ‘I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date.’ I think that's me, always looking at the clock to time my *sadhana*. Write for an hour; then *japa* for an hour; then half an hour in the bathroom (hurry up, don't be late); then another hour *japa*; then *gayatri* and out the door by 5:00 A.M. (5:05 at the latest). If it happens to be 5:07, then I feel like the hare, hurrying along, quickening the pace to make up for the lost time.

“I'm late, I'm late for a very important date; I run and then I hop-hop-hop. I wish that I could fly. I'm late, I'm late . . .

“Oh, dear, he's late. ‘Where are you going, Mr. Hare?’ (Alice asks). What a wonderful but frightening, mad world. Oh Alice . . .

“Sign on the lectern at the ISKCON Soho Street temple: ‘Dear respected guest speaker, please finish your lecture by 8:30 A.M.’ At the Manor, the phrase is added, ‘Including the question and answer session. And be sure to ask questions of the women.’

“Poor *karmis* work hard all their lives and their time is thus wasted. *Srama eva hi kevalam*. Poor cats and dogs. ‘Poor frogs,’ Srila Prabhupada said to the biologist.

“Hurry up and serve the people and the earth before it's too late. That's the serious intent—there is urgency in the Krsna conscious message. That's why devotees

are hurrying along through their morning and all-day-long program, because they want to quickly tend to their own needs and then help people. Go out and preach. Don't procrastinate.

“But take the time to do it with quality. How fast do you chant a round of *japa*? He said, ‘Sometimes four minutes, sometimes ten.’ He is an exception. The average is very fast. I shouldn't talk because fast or slow, I am still ‘out of it.’

“The inner life is important. You may appear to be hurrying or slow to you or me, but we can't judge just by the outer movement. Is the hare a fool just because he is hurrying?

“Srila Prabhupada didn't rush. He is an excellent example. But he did walk quickly. He didn't spend his whole day chanting *japa*. Writing too was done in the morning. We can't imitate. What he did was surcharged with the urgency of Krsna compassion for all *jivas*, deep as the *bhakti* ocean, so whether he took five minutes or ten to do something, we can't judge it, and we can't imitate it.

“Memoir: When Harikesa mentioned that he was spending two and a half hours cooking Prabhupada's lunch, Prabhupada said, ‘You do not know how to cook. I will show you and do it in one hour.’

“‘One hour?’ said Harikesa, almost in disbelief. ‘This is amazing.’

“Later: ‘Srila Prabhupada looked at his watch. ‘One hour,’ he said. ‘We have cooked nine preparations.’” (*Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*, Vol. 6, pp. 121-22).”

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From ***From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About: Writing While Reading Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Saranagati***

“Gone is the vanity of male egoism, O Kana. Now I am Your faithful maidservant.’ (*Saranagati*, 4.4.1) Can you believe he has come this far? From an old man lamenting his life of frustrated sense gratification, he has come not only to full surrender, but to his awareness of his eternal spiritual form. He says he has no more male egoism, but that he is now a *sakhi* or *manjari*.

“O Lord of Radha, in the groves of Vraja I will perform devotional service as a follower of one of the *sakhis*.’ This is what Bhaktivinoda Thakura most wants to tell us. He is telling us of the most beautiful desire, the best song.

“Please accept me as a *sakhi-manjari*. I will make a garland of forest flowers and *tulasi* buds. I will place that garland in the hands of the confidential *sakhi* who is my group leader. She will place the garland on the necks of Radha and Krsna. I will watch from afar.

“The confidante will then say to me, “Listen, O beautiful one, you should remain in this grove as my attendant” (*Saranagati*, 4.4.6).

“He has forgotten Bhaktivinoda. Now she is a *sakhi* in Vraja.

“Again and again that perfection is held up for us to see and aspire for. I sit in my chair in the yard, listening to the slow hum of a faraway tractor. The cough in my chest doesn’t go away, or does it? The breeze can remind me. The old man in the driveway can remind me. I have wasted my time, and I still have so far to go.

“I am eager to see what Bhaktivinoda Thakura will give us next, now that we have gone with him to the summit.

“There is a verse that states that *vaidhi-bhakti* leads to *raganuga*. Another

verse states that *vaidhi* cannot produce *bhava*. You need the *rasika* Vaisnava to guide you.”

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From ***Remembering Srila Prabhupada: A Free Verse Rendition of the Life and Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krsna Consciousness***

pp.326-30

**“IN ALL SEASONS” (continued)**

**“3.**

“In the autumn season  
 when the rain stops,  
 the land and trees become green,  
 and pink roses appear.  
 Days are hot,  
 while nights are cool,  
 and all these Vrndavana phenomena  
 you have beautifully described  
 in the *Krsna* book.  
 You return home in autumn,  
 and devotees join you here  
 as you invite them to feel  
 it’s their home also.  
 Of your house

you know every detail,  
 even of the papers in your locked *almira*.  
 In every room you are at ease.

“You saved the *tamal* tree,  
 and in the autumn morning  
 you sit beneath it  
 in your rocking chair.

While birds chirp and hop,  
 you give instructions.

‘This dirt (beneath the tamal tree]  
 may be used to polish the Deities’ brass.’

You surround your house with *tulasis*  
 and impart the practical precept,  
 ‘It is the duty of every Vaisnava  
 to water Tulasi.’

Blaring from loudspeakers  
 come sounds of *rasa-lila* plays,  
 but you do not allow  
 your devotees to go.

Thus you protect us in the *dham*  
 from the dangers of *sahajiya*.

Krsna is not so cheap  
 that we can find Him loitering in Loi Bazaar,

nor should one ever hear of Krsna  
from the professional reciter.”

“4.

In Wintertime,  
when peacocks lose their tails  
and devotees shiver without bodily relief,  
you walk in the chilly dawn,  
wrapped in sweater, scarf, and woolen hat,  
always ecstatic,  
seeing the bare land, animals and birds.  
And even if you do not say it,  
we know you feel especially right  
in any season  
when you are walking in Vrndavana.”

“5.

“In Springtime, March-April,  
the season turns again.  
Yellow mustard flowers blossom,  
and the Deities dress in yellow  
on the first day of spring.  
While walking in the park  
down by Seva-kunj  
you stop to bargain

with a *sabji-walla* and his daughter.

‘For a good price’

you buy everything they have,

bundle the vegetables

in your *cadar*

and take them home.”

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## Writing Sessions

From *Upstate: Room to Write*

### “May 29, 1996 (Continued)”

“This is my last morning walk upstate. Got the whole park to myself, all the lanes and walks and pavilions. Just me and the crows and chanting Hare Krsna and the squirrels and the rocks and the dirt and the green, bright chlorophyll dune is here. So, closing out this *Upstate*. Driving tomorrow down to the city. Looking forward to starting a new timed book, something about living in Ireland? Something to go along with the turtle pace of *Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam* now in the sixth chapter of the First Canto, the fourth volume. Haribol.

“You want to say more about living in temples? Just a couple of quickies. I recommend it for youngsters. The temple is a good place to visit...

“This is not the deepest thing for me to talk about. You’ve been given some time to write outside the temple life. But now, what will you write? What does it

mean to go deep? Often you write about death but it's just a sort of exercise, like a child walking to the edge of the ocean, going as far as he dares and then running back.

“I'm a writer and my message is already chalked out. That's not usual for writers. Some are always fancy in that they're blazing new trails, finding new forms, new ideas. But other writers settle with a form and try to develop it and make it better. I'm a Prabhupada messenger. I'm teaching Krsna's *upadesa*. Just finding new ways to say it and to also tell the personal story of my *saranagati*. For me, there's no question of finding a new guru or a new philosophy in my later years. That's all settled. But still, there are exciting prospects of how to write and what to write. It's a daily practice, a vocation. I like that line of thought where he says that writing (or painting or any art) is not primarily for creating a beautiful object, but its purpose is to work at the vocation, to worship God through that medium. If non-theistic or vaguely theistic artists can ascribe to that program, how much more can I claim it because we're in the service of Lord Gauranga and His pure devotees?

“Then why not go and live in Gauranga's holy land Mayapur or Vrndavana? Yes, yes, I'm going...in two days...to Ireland, writing what Prabhupada has said, following his footsteps. He did not live in Vrndavana and Mayapur, but kept a consciousness of serving Krsna and Gauranga while traveled around the world.

“Today upstate, tomorrow New York City, the next day Ireland.

**“10:35 A.M.**

“Close up this little one. A vacation of sorts, that walk for only a half-hour in the state park ... It's an illusion. You don't want to be all alone, do you? In the spiritual world Krsna is with His devotees.

“The mystics say, ‘alone with the Alone.’ But Krsna is not alone. He’s with Radha and the *gopis* and parents and friends. Get used to that conception as superior. Alone is a negative reaction against material socializing. It has its place, and works for you.

“Going to Ireland now. Can you explain yourself? You want to stick a flag on the moon of Saratoga, five days and say, ‘I did something here.’ This is it.

“Eye twinge on the horizon. But you have medication. Heck, even the president of the U.S. and his biggest rival use that sort of thing. These bodies can’t last forever. Use it while you can.

“May all moorings be safe and secure. Wave goodbye to the people, to the memory of two disastrous fires in Saratoga and F.D.R.’s many visits and Thomas Dewey’s mustache and the Little League baseball team of 1955 and the girls now grown old and died –

“yes, I’m sorry about that

but the Algonquin Bank reigns supreme

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was here too and hope springs up in the Orenda spring and other springs sacred to the Native Americans. I’m from this soil, but only two generations back by my forefathers, who were from Italy and Ireland. I’ll go there now, to Inis Rath.

“Long face, your mug

ain’t proper.

“Shave it up. Smile. You are sagging all over. And added weight doesn’t help your niche. Smile.

“Hoping to improve and love all beings by loving Krsna

who is *param isvarah*  
Lord of all *yogis*  
Friend of special devotees  
and knowing Him is not an easy job.

“Okay, sign off.

Krsna-love is the beat

up-tempo combo

Krsna Love.

“I’ll meet you in the next place. Saratoga was quiet and I said it enough. A little restart here. Down on my knees now. Worship the spiritual master happily.”

**(End of *Upstate: Room to Write*)**