

Free Write Journal #153

July 23, 2021

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Free Writes

Prabhupada Lilamrta in Spanish

Guru Prasad Maharaja, the GBC for Latin America, phoned me and informed me that the BBT has translated the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* into Spanish. This is very good news. They will have an inauguration ceremony on August 1st. To acknowledge this great achievement, Maharaja invited me to talk on that day at 11:00 A.M. on Zoom. Other speakers will also contribute. Spanish is one of the most popular languages in the world. It is also being translated in Bengali, so this is good news. People will get an inside view of Srila Prabhupada, and this will help them strengthen their Krsna consciousness and allegiance to the Founder-*Acarya*. Guru Prasad Maharaja was very kind to me on the phone, praising my little service to Srila Prabhupada, especially in writing many books. I hope in the coming years the unabridged *Lilamrta* will be translated into more languages. It is long overdue.

The Appearance of Krsna

In our out-loud reading we are hearing of the appearance of Krsna in the prison cell of Kamsa. He manifests His form of Lord Visnu, adorned with many precious ornaments and wearing a yellow *dhoti*. He is not born as an ordinary child. His mother and father, Devaki and Vasudeva, recognize Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vasudeva was the first to offer prayers to his newborn son. He said,

“My Lord, You are the Supreme Person, beyond material existence, and You are the Supersoul. Your form can be perceived by transcendental knowledge, by which You can be understood as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I now understand Your position perfectly.” (*Bhag.* 10.3.13)

Devaki next offered her prayers. Having seen that her child had all the symptoms of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Devaki, who was very much afraid of Kamsa and unusually astonished, began by saying,

“My Lord, because You dispel all the fear of Your devotees, I request You to save us and give us protection from the terrible fear of Kamsa. Your form as Visnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is appreciated by yogis in meditation. Please make this form invisible to those who see with material eyes. O my Lord, You are the all-pervading Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Your transcendental four-armed form holding conchshell, disc, club and lotus, is unnatural to this world. Please withdraw this form and become just like a human child so that I may try to hide You somewhere.”
(*Bhag.* 10.3.30)

Krsna complied with His parents’ wishes and transformed Himself to an ordinary infant. He then ordered His parents to take Him to Gokula, and there place Him as the newly-born son of Yasoda.

Karttika Moon

I received a fresh copy of the book *Karttika Moon*. I am proofreading it and so is Krishna Bhajana. I plan to serialize it. The book will be serialized in a few weeks in the *Free Write Journal* so

that the full book will be available by Karttika.

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I'm two-thirds through reading *Karttika Moon*. It's divided into three sections.

1) *Karttika Papers*, which was begun in Mayapura and has many distractions from concentrated free-writing.

2) This one is titled *Karttika While Traveling*. It tells of me and Madhu driving from Spain to Ireland, taking several ferry rides and undergoing the austerity of life on the ferries. Yet we intend to keep up the spirit of Karttika, lighting candles at night. (Here again I could not settle down into calm introspection but told of life on the road. This was written during the month of Karttika, and we tried our best to observe the month of Damodara, not eating any sweets and chanting in the P-stops early in the morning. We were parked in the rear of the ferry, but Madhu stealthily drove the van slowly up front while the deckhands were oblivious to us as they unhooked the chains from the trucks. We were the second ones off the ferry. I admired M's crafty driving.)

3) In this section, *Karttika in Exile*, we are finally situated in Wicklow, Ireland, and gradually getting into uninterrupted writing and reading. (I think of devotees observing Karttika all over the world, and we are doing it too in a private cottage in Wicklow.)

Our intention is to serialize sections of this book in the *Free Write Journal*, so that devotees can read it during the sacred month of Damodara.

Old Wine in New Bottles

Most of the books I've been recently publishing were written over twenty years ago. This is the first time they've been published and read by devotees. They are free-writing books and are fresh,

new and experimental. The books I quote excerpts from in my weekly Journal are also books that have been written some years ago. *Japa Reform Notebook* was written 40 years ago, and it's still a favorite; it was recently reprinted in India. This shows that my books were written ahead of their time and are read now as new. Over that amount of time there is a whole new generation of readers. The newly-published books are not conservative like some of the books I wrote long ago. But I wrote them at a time when I had creative vigor, and I like the way they came out.

Letter Typist

The typist of my correspondence is anonymous. He lives in Italy and has a full-time job and a family. But he's pleased and grateful to type my letters. For some time I didn't have a steady typist. But he is very steady. He recently wrote me that he is caught up typing my correspondence of thank-you letters from devotees who gave donations at my gathering on July 3rd. Because English is his second language, he occasionally makes a spelling mistake. But it should be clear about what he intended, and there has never been a complaint about the confidentiality of my typist.

The Prodigal Son

Purusa, the prodigal son, drove down to Florida, where he has a house and where his daughter lives. He wants to set her up there so she can maintain the house and the cats. He phoned Baladeva and said he was just making sandwiches for his trip up north, where he will associate with us again. He has had a haircut to look more clean and respectable. He's coming without reservations. He's trying to reform and improve his habits. At present he doesn't have any established quota of chanting *japa*. He's hoping to be a role model for so many other people who have left Krsna consciousness and who are now in their sixties. He said if he can do it, anyone can do it.

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Muktavandya came and brought plenty of flowers, mostly roses and carnations. Muktavandya brought his collection of “dumb jokes.” They are photographs with funny captions, and he shared them with me. Purusa (the prodigal son) drove back twenty hours to his house in Florida, but he phoned us and said he would be back next Thursday to join us in *seva* at Viraha Bhavan. He likes the *sanga* here, and he’s willing to help out with the services. When he comes, he may stay for a while.

Pressure Wound

I went to see my primary care physician for a pressure wound on my right side. It appeared four months ago but was not painful at first. It just looked like a discoloration. But as time went by it didn’t heal, and it became red and painful to touch. The primary care physician prescribed bandages for me with Medihoney (a dressing that eases pain). He also advised me to take a course of antibiotics. Last night, to avoid the pain, I slept on my left side and avoided contact with the sores. But overnight this developed an ache on my left side because of the awkward position in bed. I am getting full experience of old age and disease, universal to all living beings. I am tolerant and patient, but I have to advance my Krsna consciousness so that I don’t come back into another woman’s womb and be born as a conditioned soul again, subject to *janma mrtyu jara vyadhi*—birth, death, disease and old age.

Bala and the Out-Loud Readers

Yesterday Bala from Trinidad appealed to the out-loud readers to be more considerate. He is in charge of calling on the different devotees to read, and often they don’t keep track of the last verse they read. So he has to remind them of what verse to read, but he finds this stressful because he is doing so much else, picking who will read next, working the controls so that we can see people reading on the computer. He also has other morning duties like making breakfast and doing personal

things for me. He told them it's stressful for him to do too much multitasking since his serious operation. I also get disturbed hearing miscellaneous chat talk that goes on before the reading starts. And while this chat goes on I am trying to peacefully honor *prasadam* before it's my chance to take turns and read.

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From ***A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam, Volume 1***

pp. 9-10

“I love to read Prabhupada's unedited English in his 1962 edition. ‘He sees at night in the sky and naturally thinks what are the stars, how they are situated, who lives there, and so on.’ Later, Prabhupada told Hayagriva, ‘Put it nicely.’ Then Jayadvaita dasa began to edit because he told Prabhupada he could bring it closer to the original. (I remember not wanting to change his *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. After all, William Faulkner and James Joyce broke all the rules and created their own styles and people accepted their writings. Why couldn't Prabhupada do that too?)

“I've grown up since those days when Prabhupada was on the West Coast, and we live on in his wake.

“I am still trying to
 come clean and be true and
 surrendered, to work hard as
 I did then.
 I'm still waiting to become
 Sri Krsna's unalloyed devotee,
 but Sri Jiva says time
 has nothing to do with it.

You have to be pure and
 love God and work for Him.“
 Read on.

“When we did look up at the stars and wonder where they all came from, the *Bhagavatam* was there to reply: The Lord is the origin of all creations. I still have that 1962 edition, although the pages are fading. . . .

“They didn’t discover Prabhupada’s *Bhagavatam* in San Francisco in the ’60s, altho’ they were so Beat and hip.

Ginsberg told them confidentially that the Swami was too conservative—against most kinds of sex and against all drugs (even tea!).

He was only into chanting
 Hare Krsna.

They missed it.

I didn’t.

I’m still hanging on.

“To live the life of a *Bhagavatam* reader we have to practice the four regulative principles and chant Hare Krsna. We have to understand Krsna as Paramesvara, as Para-tattva. Otherwise, we’ll miss the point. Reading—real, devotional reading—is deep, pure work. It’s more important than constructing temples.”

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pp.146-47

“I will die. If I can go to Vrndavana to die, if I get such a warning, won’t it be similar to my last visit—then I won’t want to meet people, and so on? Maybe stay at Baladeva’s house and die there.

“These random thoughts come, but how are they connected to the *Bhagavatam*? In this way: these thoughts occur while I live and read the *Bhagavatam*. I read about Naimisaranya 5000 years ago and think of Prabhupada in 1960 writing the first volume of his *Bhagavatam* translation. I am here now in India doing this while these things come to mind. That’s the connection. Now whether others think it’s a worthy or publishable connection, that’s a different topic, but the connection is a natural one. I can’t pretend I’m always living in the *Bhagavatam* texts, but at least I always return to them.”

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pp.156-57

“Personally, I like it when an author tells us what he’s doing while he writes his book. Most authors don’t do that, but I always look for it when I read. I recall an essay on Thoreau by E. B. White where White tells us he is writing in a shack and a chipmunk or some similar animal is nearby. He says that his setting for the writing seems appropriate for the subject, the naturalist-philosopher Thoreau. Why don’t authors do this more?

“What about me? If a writer is defined as someone ordered by his spiritual master to write in *parampara*, fine; it’s a traditional service, and the guru is proud of

the disciple who prosecutes it nicely. It may be that the disciple inherited his writing proclivity from past karma and that it was once a misused talent. Now, however, he uses it to purify himself.

“If he is climbing out of past karma, he may still be impressed with mundane authors. Names pop up from the psyche—the backlog of authors whose books he’s read. The list seem endless.

“There were many authors I once loved, or pretended to love, so I could carve the image of myself as a literary man. I didn’t want to be a carpenter, a naval officer, a baseball hero, a chemist, or a businessman. I read and assimilated novels, poems, and essays. I discovered at seventeen that I could write passable English compositions—not just for school grades, but for my own use as a growing person (secret diary) and as—dare I hope?—material for a literary career. Now I want to make literature and simultaneously write to purify and discover myself and my way. But be careful about that creative drive; use it all in *bhakti*.”

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pp. 12-13

“Reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* I think of many
 things, alas not all connected
 with the sports and
 teachings of the Lord.
 But I’ll be okay, delivered
 by virtue of holding the book,
 the Indian brick-colored volume with

dust jacket art of Goloka emanating *brahmajyoti* light
 and the Vaikunthas
 and down under a cloud,
 the material world.

“When I first read this as a young man, I awakened to my path.
 Now I continue to imbibe it. There is nothing else to do but read *Srimad-
 Bhagavatam*. I hold onto the particular verses and purports for a while,
 then read on. Do I retain anything? Some impression? Maybe. It seems to
 come unstuck from my mind and flow into forgetfulness, so I read it
 again, pointing with a pencil along the page, left to right and down,
 guiding myself, reading aloud. I am trying to stay with the *Bhagavatam*,
 not abandon it for those other thoughts, those distractions. I keep it up
 for a while, then take a break.

“Why do I hesitate to say that I am
 in Vrndavana,
 hearing a *bhajana* loudspeakered
 outside our ISKCON walls?”

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pp.16-17

“Prabhupada writes, surprisingly, about spiritual sex life (*adi-rasa*) at the end of
 his first *Bhagavatam* purport. He says that because sex is so prominent, it must be
 real. Its true feature, however, isn’t found in this world but in the spiritual world, free

of material desire. ‘*Srimad-Bhagavatam* will gradually elevate the unbiased reader to the highest perfectional stage of transcendence.’

“I may say I’ve read the *Bhagavatam* quite a few times in my life and therefore I am ready to study spiritual *adi-rasa*. Some devotees hanker for it, but I have decided to start again with the First Canto. That feels right to me. (That’s perhaps another virtue of free-writing—it gives me release and also reveals the reality of my immature state.) I’m satisfied to read Prabhupada’s books, provided I can be myself and work out the details of what his purports mean to me here and now. I guess you could call that a virtue too, if you know what I mean.”

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From ***Japa Walks, Japa Talks***

pp.23

“The man who would answer questions about chanting goes out and chants his own rounds. Using a stopwatch this morning, I noticed that the first round took a little over ten minutes. Too slow, but that's not really a big problem. One of my Godbrothers takes ten minutes a round, and he has been chanting like that for over twenty years. He just accepts it. The main thing is to pay attention and to hear.

I heard my chanting and didn't notice other sounds—birds, small chirpy sounds, and then always behind those noises, the sound of the running creek. In the distance, a dog was barking. The air was delicious, but I didn't notice that much either. I didn't gauge the breeze by the movement of branches—I just chanted *japa*.”

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From ***Forgetting the Audience***

pp.76-77

“I am not ashamed to ask it again and again. You see, that's performance-worry, when I think, ‘I have already written here that I want to improve chanting. If I keep on repeating it, it will be tiresome to the reader.’ That's crap. It's important for me to keep saying it: I want to improve, I want to improve. I want to chant better, and I think I can do it. I can improve. I just have to take the mind from where it is and bring it back to hearing.

“I rarely do that. Very rarely do I think this is Krsna, this is Radha. Rarely do I even hear it. I don't know what I am doing. Usually something, or I fall asleep.

“Overall it's not bad; you are a nice person and all that, but for real results, we'll have to consult someone else. I mean we need a real guru, not you who can't even chant. We appreciate your honesty about it, but we need to go to a higher stage of *hari-nama*.’

“Leave me on the beach to chant my mantras with no depth. But I come back here and tell you about it.

“I am going to do better. Right after I finish this page I'll do round number fourteen and then do two more on the beach. Don't despair or expect the heavens to open and Lord Visnu to come down as He did in *yajna*, as when they chanted the hymns and, with devotion, longed to see Him. I want to do better and come away from this retreat. *Begging for the Nectar* may be better than anything I write now. But I still have to write now. *Begging* was written over a year ago. I have to keep moving, keep moving.”

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

pp.437-38

“July 13

Dallas

“Sesa is here. Suggests I write the biography from my own viewpoint. Can’t expect to please everyone. I’m interested in what he says. Surely readability is increased when I write of Srila Prabhupada from my own feeling. When I let another speak his feeling, however, that is also interesting. My own version can be the background. When I express myself, it is not so much authoritarian as real experience—that will be appreciated.

“I feel threatened that I have to abandon any concentrated work due to my other duties.

“Have to learn to write one and a half hours from 12:30-2:00 A.M.—be damned if I get tired later. And at least for an hour during the day, prepare myself for the next night’s writing.

“Let me finish that Introduction essay at least in its first draft, and go on to trying to actually write his life.”

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From ***Songs from Stuyvesant Falls***

pp.54-56

“4:34 A.M.

“Thinking Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was uncomfortable sleeping on a bark of plantain trees, Jagadananda made a pillow and quilt for Him. The Lord, however, did not accept them. Then Svarupa Damodara

made another pillow and quilt from finely-shredded plantain leaves and after strongly objecting, the Lord accepted them. Jagadananda begged permission from the Lord to go visit Vrndavana. The Lord permitted him but

instructed that he should stay with Sanatana Gosvami and not associate with the residents of Vrndavana.

Jagadananda lived with Sanatana, and one day while eating together he noticed Sanatana was wearing a red garment around his head.

Thinking it must be a gift from Lord Caitanya, Jagadananda asked him where he got it. When Sanatana said

it was a gift from a *sannyasi* named Mukunda Sarasvati, Jagadananda became angry and took a cooking pot to hit Sanatana. Sanatana became somewhat ashamed and said, 'My dear Jagadananda no one is dearer to Lord Caitanya than you.

This faith in the Lord quite befits you. Unless you demonstrate it, how could I learn such faith?

This cloth is unfit for a Vaisnava to wear therefore I have no use for it.' After eating *prasadam*, they embraced each other and cried in separation from Lord Caitanya.

“Thinking of Jagadananda's love, I chant my

japa in thoughtfulness.”

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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. 221-22

“TO AFRICA”

(September 10, 1971)

“To Mombasa’s beach,
 where he recovered from ill health,
 then flying to Nairobi—
 a city for preaching.
 Staying at Hindu homes,
 Prabhupada became their guru and friend.
 But one night, calling Brahmananda Swami to his room,
 he said, ‘Preach to the Africans.
 They are the proprietors of this land.
 You say they are poor,
 they speak Swahili,
 and they are culturally alien
 compared to the Indians.
 But we have come to Africa
 for the Africans. So do it.’

Prabhupada started it himself.
 Showing no distinction between African and Hindu,
 in a Radha-Krsna temple downtown,
 they opened the doors to all,
 and a rushing sea of young urchins
 poured in the door,
 along with the poor and the pickpockets.

When Prabhupada arrived
 the black sea of humanity parted,
 welcoming his entrance.

Onstage, he spoke in English
 to a Swahili-speaking crowd,
 but they were patient,
 and loved the *kirtana* and *prasad*.

“He sent Brahmananda Swami into the street
 to hold *harinama*—a great success.

And he went to the University of Nairobi,
 where he told the students,
 ‘Don't follow the Westerners with their empires.

When there is nuclear war,
 all their skyscrapers will be finished.

Build your nation on a spiritual foundation,
 without discrimination, with Krishna Consciousness.’

Wherever he went in Nairobi,

Indians and Africans loved him,
 just as all people loved the Six Gosvamis of Vrndavana.
 In the midst of these activities
 Prabhupada told his men,
 "Work now, samadhi later.'
 The trance of absorption in Krishna-thought
 could be obtained by working,
 with the body and mind engaged
 in spreading Lord Chaitanya's mission.
 So they should all do like he,
 who at 75 was working day and night.
 "Keep me talking—that is my life.
 Don't let me stop talking. . . ."

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From ***My Dear Lord Krsna: A Book of Prayers***

pp.165-66

“At lunch, devotees talked about preaching, recruiting people to become initiated devotees in Krsna consciousness. Those who work at that surely become dear to You. I am not active in that field. But I still want to come closer to You and please You. Is it possible? Can I write myself to a more affectionate relationship with You? I want to do that. I want to say, ‘Krsna, You are my best friend. You have done more for me than anyone. I love You more than any other person.’ I want to say those things and mean them. You are the most majestic, Great Being. But I want to feel friendly with You. I don't mean presumptuously buddy-buddy, but somehow intimately friendly. The fact is,

You are the closest person in my life. You uphold me, You keep me alive, You love me and care for me. So why should I not say You are my best friend?"

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From ***The Wild Garden: Collected Writings 1990-1993***

pp. 4-5

“Vr̄ndavana

“Listen—you can hear many voices. It sounds like they are chanting prayers. I have heard them out there since 3:30 this morning—masses of people walking together. Maybe it's one those near-the-end-of-Karttika *parikramas* where thousands of pilgrims arrive as if from nowhere. But Madhu said it might be people gathering for a nationwide strike called for by Hindu politicians protesting the mosque in Ayodhya. I hear ladies singing. It's probably a *parikrama*.

“Krsna, I often feel emptiness, inertia, a brick wall when I try to approach You. It reminds me of the wall circling this house. It is flimsy and low. The top four layers of bricks aren't even cemented in place, just piled up. People take them away. The wall is so low that a dog can hop over it. It's not the Great Wall of China. Is my brick wall like that? Easily dismantled?

“There is a little person inside me who encourages me to keep writing it down. Srila Prabhupada said that Krsna wrote his books. Krsna is in everyone's heart. Because we have become conditioned not to listen to Him, we have to approach a spiritual master to teach us how to hear and respond. ‘Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is no one other than Krsna Himself.’(Cc., Adi 1.58) A

fortunate person takes his dictation from the guru. A fool listens to his own speculations. ‘He is a seminal thinker,’ they say.

“The voices are a little louder now. I can’t hear the sounds of bare feet on the earth—this house is close to the *parikrama* trail—but I sense movement, excitement, everything flowing past in the dark. Srila Prabhupada liked to quote a police report about an early San Francisco Ratha-yatra: ‘This is not a window-breaking crowd.’ The *parikramers* are like that.”

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From *Morning Songs*

pp.22-23

“The Rain Has Turned . . .”

“The rain has turned into
snow. We may have another
snowfall. Hankering for spring.

“Today a local baby eats her
first solid food in a brahminical
ceremony, but we won’t be able
to attend with our conflicting schedule.
We can drop in and see the baby
another day.

“I am writing my new book
and printing ‘old friends’

on a daily basis.

“Today I go way back to
Guru Reform and the written
 poems at Gita-nagari,
Talking to My Lords.
 One poem in there says
 living in Gita-nagari and
 walking through the leaves
 is as good as visiting
 Vrndavana. There’s a
 segment on controlling the
 mind from *Obstacles on the*
Path of Devotional Service.

“A page or two from *Canakya slokas*
 as quoted by Prabhupada. I
 hope to keep these
 books in print,
 available on the Internet,
 never to disappear.

“I spent my life laboring
 to shape books as
 my prime offering to

Prabhupada's movement,
and to his devotees and
new friends. They don't
go out of date. I am
grateful for the chance
to do that service for
the Lord.

"Each book is an offering
to Krsna, made in
parampara, not from
the highest platform
but sincere and
always aiming at plain truth.

"I have a good supply
and hope to keep on
coming out with them
daily in a variety of
selections.

"Yes, it's snowing heavily
now, you'd get
covered if you tried to walk
outdoors. March snow

storms are just as fierce as midwinter.

“I’ll continue writing
 indoors and maybe
 on the porch if it
 warms up a bit.
 I’m happy with
 my assignment and
 the snow and ice
 are pretty although
 hazardous.”

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pp.31-32

“If Krsna Will Be Kind”

“If Krsna will be kind
 to lift us out of the muck
 although we don’t deserve
 it. He measures things
 exactly, and you have to
 pay for it.

“But if you become a rightly
 resolved devotee according to
 guru and *sastra* then

He won't consider you
diminished if you
commit abominable acts.

“If you are a fixed devotee
He forgives you and
by continuing to serve Him
He moves the justice
of the courtroom and
accepts you utterly.

“This is the conclusion
for those who promise
not to commit sins again.
They see the consequences of falldown
and must be considered
sadhus.

But if they indulge in falldown again
they won't be considered
a high devotee. Krsna is kind and gives
the benefit of the doubt
to those who worship Him and
serve Him with all their might.

“To repent and regret
 and showing up
 at the military camp
 say, ‘Yo!’ when their
 name’s called and
 push their shoulder to
 the wheel.”

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pp.82-83

“Chanting by 1:10 A.M.

4:49 A.M.

“Chanting by 1:10 A.M.

chasing the forms of

Radha-Govinda. He with

His long flute. She offering

Him a betel nut in Her right

hand, both dressed in bright yellow

with *jari* design. The rounds

moved rapidly through the quiet

room with rain beating outside.

Last night was a nectar section

of *Cc.*, describing the *yuga-avatars*.

He was white in Satya, red in Treta,

blackish in Dvapara, and in Kali-

yuga, He appeared golden. Sanatana
 hinted it might be his Teacher,
 but Lord Caitanya avoided him and
 said the *avatara* is known by
 the *sastra*. Yet the *sastra* quoted
 clearly indicated it is Mahaprabhu
 and although Kali is a sea of
 vices, there is one great quality,
 the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra
 which delivers pure love of God.

“At lunch we talked two hours.
 Haryasva and Nitai are rare
 survivors, both good and loyal
 recalling the old days in ISKCON
 when they were the second generation and
 had to do all the work
 and surrender to the first
 generation, those were difficult
 days, but they recalled them
 without regret looking forward
 to what Krsna will unfold next.
 It was too much for me, and
 I got a headache.
 I talked with Haridasa dasa

whose family has moved to a
 new house, and he is satisfied
 teaching the summer semester
 at college. Each Sunday we
 talk in a sacred trust.

The poem is a speak-easy
 transmit. I told Haridasa
 with the autobiog. I am
 like a *brahmana* who
 gives away all his provisions
 on day and depends the
 next on the mercy of the Lord.

So far the window is open,
 but I don't know
 how long it will remain so.

Now the rain is beating
 down hard, and I'm
 protected in my room."

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From ***Prabhupada Nectar***

pp.183-84

"In 1975 in Berkeley, Prabhupada was shown Pariksit dasa's new painting of baby Krsna carrying Nanda Maharaja's shoes on His head. Prabhupada liked the painting very much. 'Just see how Krsna is serving His devotee just like a little child,'

Prabhupada said. He also pointed out that Pariksit had not spoiled the painting by putting ‘big, big hairs,’ whereas ‘Jadurani always puts big, big hairs. Woman is very fond of big, big hairs.’ One of the devotees then took a copy of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* from the bookshelf. Showing Prabhupada the cover painting of the Panca-tattva, the devotee said, ‘Srila Prabhupada, what about Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu? Generally we paint Him with long hair.’ Srila Prabhupada began to joke. ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘Caitanya Mahaprabhu—He was a hippy. Therefore He has come to save you.’ The devotees began to laugh at Prabhupada’s humor, but because Srila Prabhupada’s Bengali inflection added a slight ‘sh’ to save, no one was positive whether Prabhupada was saying save or shave. Srila Prabhupada immediately noticed this. He was chuckling and repeated, ‘Yes, He has come to save you and shave you. Caitanya Mahaprabhu has come to save you and shave you.’”

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

pp. 234-35

“September 20

Radhastami

“Last night I told Madhu that if I could have three consecutive days of improved health, I would consider traveling. On September 18, I canceled our upcoming travels, realizing that they were unrealistic for one in my condition. The headaches are coming too frequently. Madhu advised that I wait until Monday (three days from now) to decide. If we decide to travel, he said, we can make it as undemanding as possible. I can travel as a semi-invalid. Then Madhu said we could think of the van as an ambulance to

carry me back to Ireland if my health breaks down. Or, we could simply stop wherever we are while I recover.

“Often the outer purpose of my life doesn’t seem satisfying either to myself or others. I tend to think my life is insubstantial. Others can see I don’t do much, and the decision to travel or not to travel may also seem insubstantial. I tend not to judge myself quite in that way even when I ask the inevitable questions: ‘What am I doing? Is it important? Is it helping me develop Krsna consciousness? Is it the best I can do right now?’ I want to hit a vein and test my blood, follow it in writing to my heart.

“In one sense, the essence of life is only acted out on the external level. For me, I find that writing goes a long way to achieve the purpose of my life. The traveling or staying in one place is external. My service is not traveling but writing. Therefore, I find my real satisfaction there. The travel may augment my writing because it provides interesting data upon which I can report. That data, however, may also reveal the outer struggle for survival which is not the deepest aspect of spiritual life. Therefore, I say I am writing to find my purpose—‘determination, resolve.’”

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From ***Shack Notes***

pp. 170-71

“The truth is, I am unqualified to write *krsna-katha*. I should in no way venture on my own in this sublime topic. But I cannot be still. What does Prabhupada say? He says, ‘Write your realizations.’ He says do something to spread Krsna consciousness. He says it is a *sannyasi*’s first duty to write. He says write to save the crippled humanity. Krsna will be pleased, even as a father is pleased by the broken speech of his little child. Speak of Him.

“My dear Lord Krsna, I read of Your pastimes in Prabhupada's books. I am desiring to enter them more. But You have also expanded Your energies to create all reality. Therefore, I also want to feel Your presence in ordinary life.

“I want to obey your guides. I want to serve You. And one day, I want my faulty and self-conscious ‘I’ to melt away and be replaced by a pure consciousness, a consciousness knowing only You.

“I am trying to use words to find a way past the deadness, the spaced-out forgetfulness of You. Even these apparent meanderings, as soon as I begin them, give me hope that I am on the trail that leads to You.”

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From ***Prabhupada Meditations, Volume 3***

pp.16-17

“Back to Bombay

“One of our best times for telling Prabhupada stories was just after I had been with him as his servant for seven months. I then joined the library party and traveled around the United States quickly, visiting many universities and libraries in all parts of the country. We were always traveling, but usually we wound up in a motel at night. The devotees—Mahabuddhi, Ghanasyama, Mahadyuti, Kalakanta, Sesa, and others—gathered as I read from the manuscript of the not-yet-published *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. Then I remembered Srila Prabhupada.

“I had fresh stories to tell since I had just been with him. They were such a nice audience, always delighting in hearing about our spiritual master. In their company I felt free to admit my foolishness with Prabhupada, and they inspired me to remember many details. Let me recall again being with them, in a motel just north of Little Rock,

Arkansas, after a good day in which the university took full sets of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. In the company of the *brahmacaris*, I remember . . . days with Prabhupada in Bombay.

“He was in his bed under the mosquito net, and I was out on the veranda. I took rest shortly after he did, listening to the mosquitoes buzzing outside my net. Sometimes I awoke around 1 A.M. when Prabhupada got up to dictate. It was not my duty to rise then, so I drifted in and out of sleep while hearing him click the button on the dictation machine. Then around 3 A.M., while he was still dictating, I got up, and in a sleepy, unclean state, walked past Prabhupada. He sat in his big mosquito net ‘tent’ at his writing desk. I made obeisances, but did not say anything so as not to disturb his writing mood. I went outside and bathed in a nearby shack, pouring water on myself from a can. I returned and tried not to interrupt Prabhupada, who was still under his tent.

“After Prabhupada finished dictation, he began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I folded up both my own net and his net and fixed his bed. After cleaning my area, I went to the kitchen to chant my *japa* silently. When Prabhupada chanted, I mostly heard ‘Ram, Ram.’ It seemed that the volume of his *japa* would rise a little and become more distinct—at least to my ears in the other room—with the words ‘Ram, Ram.’ I had to chant silently in the kitchen and it was very difficult. I fought to stay awake and also had little duties to perform such as getting Prabhupada’s medicine ready. I had to crush a particular type of nut with a black mortar and pestle, and then his red medicine would be mixed in, mashed together, and served to him. These little rituals were my life and soul and I did them as best I could.”

From *Japa Walks, Japa Talks*

pp.62-63

“The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* chapter ‘Yamaraja Instructs His Messengers,’ has many wonderful statements about the potency of the holy name. Prabhupada states, ‘There is no need to conduct research into the significance of the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra. The history of Ajamila is sufficient proof.’

“Neither is there a need for any other process. The chanting of the holy names is sufficient. ‘It is to be concluded that with a strong vow one should chant the holy name of the Lord—Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare—for thus one will certainly be delivered from the clutches of *maya* by the grace of Krsna . . .’

“The chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra is recommended even for persons who commit offenses, because if they continue chanting they will gradually chant offenselessly. By chanting the Hare Krsna mantra without offenses, one increases his love for Krsna. As stated by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, *prema pumartho mahan*: one’s main concern should be to increase one’s attachment to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and to increase one’s love for Him.’ (*Bhag.* 6.3.24, purport).

“Prabhupada writes further, ‘Even if in the beginning one chants the Hare Krsna mantra with offenses, one will become free from such offenses by chanting again and again. *Papa-kṣayas ca bhavati smarataṁ tam ahar-nisam*: one becomes free from all sinful reactions if one chants day and night, following the recommendation of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.’ (*Bhag.* 6.3.24, purport)

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From *My Relationship with Lord Krsna*

pp.33-34

“My dear Lord Krsna, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All glories to You! The Vedic literature praises Your glories, but it can never come to the limit of Your greatness. Other world religions also praise You. Only fools—those who think themselves God—and atheists do not praise You. The atheists think that the cosmic manifestation was created by chance, but nothing happens by chance. Everything is under Your control.

“Dear Lord, I am dependent on the scriptures and on my spiritual master to tell me about You, yet each of us can know You by perception. We perceive our own consciousness, which is an expansion of the supreme consciousness. Our individual consciousness is ruled by a higher source, and that is You.

“I am speaking these philosophical words just to fend off the atheist within me. But I wish to approach You, not just argue in favor of Your existence. The best kind of prayer is to ask for pure devotional service. O Lord Krsna, O energy of the Lord, Hara, please engage me in Your service. I am already serving You, but now I ask to serve You in love. Please enlighten me. Make me more fit to serve You and not my own senses.

“We are small. Therefore, we become stuck in our pitiful condition. We have heard of Your blissful nature and Your abode, but we are still somehow bound by the material body and the material concepts of fear, repulsion, attachment, and the desire to lord it over and enjoy this world. Will You release us from this entanglement? We cannot release ourselves.”

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Writing Sessions

From *Dublin Pieces (June 1996)*

#3

“We were rejected at the motor registration bureau. They wouldn’t allow a US owner of the van, who was not the driver, to bring it into Ireland without taxes. Refused, but Aidan said it was all right for us to travel out of the country while we appeal our case. We plan to do that if M.’s insurance company doesn’t mind. Complicated stuff. Madhu tried to appeal to Aidan’s sense of reason, giving the example of the Pope-mobile, which is exclusively for the Pope’s use but he’s not the driver. No go—we don’t fit into one of their categories. If we lose the appeal, we may have to pay some \$5,000 in taxes.

“I’m writing this at the ISKCON preaching center. Now we are going to relocate to Ramanuja’s apartment, which is fifteen minutes from here. Life in the van hasn’t begun, but we are constantly entangled by this possession. My brain is filled with it.

“We showed the guy a stack of envelopes to prove that I’ve been in the USA, especially for the past few months. The top four envelopes said, ‘Stephen Guarino.’ The rest said, ‘Satsvarupa Maharaja.’ Downstairs in the waiting room there was a form posted on the wall informing motorists something about a concession and a delay. Under it were three separate graffiti remarks:

“‘Mickey Mouse is dead.’

‘Renault Five for sale, only two bullet holes.’

‘Follow me, Yaa!’

“O Lord, I would like to help people who want to practice Krsna consciousness. I should be able to do it. I have tenure. I can convey stability to them. Take the time to do it when you can. Be friendly.

“Manu mentioned that in my writing I painstakingly prove, with accumulated evidence, that I am not a pure devotee. I’m writing for myself. But it helps others. Maybe not those who want someone to encourage them to go out on book distribution, although that’s possible too.

“Bureaucrats seemed to relish denying us. He certainly didn’t try to plead our case or interpret in our favor. He has his job, and we didn’t fit into the right category – a guru who doesn’t drive his own vehicle. The form says the vehicle must be for the *sole use* of the owner. We said it is for my sole use. We took him to the van and showed him how it is set up with a desk and bed and books for my use, and Madhu is my chauffeur. ‘No, sorry, you have to be the driver.’ We didn’t want to press the analogy of the pope because he doesn’t see me that way. He didn’t seem deeply friendly, although at the beginning of the interview he said, ‘Lovely’ and brought in a third chair so we could all sit in the shabby office. When we said, ‘Ford Econoline,’ he said, “There is a song by Nancy Griffith about a Ford Econoline.’ It’s a drag. I want to read *SB* but there is no book in this room, and anyway . . .”

(June 24, 1996, 11:30 A.M.)

“#4”

“I am tired out. I could spend this last energy in the day talking to the few devotees here. Be a warm person. But I turn to warm-up on the page. Someone says, ‘If you only write a journal, then you observe life and not participate, and if you only live and don’t write a journal, you are participating in that observing.’ So, you should balance. Sharing in this small apartment.

“Go to bed with new earplugs. No mattress, just a rug and sleeping bag and my sharp hips. I used to do this on the wood floor of the *BTG* office in LA and wherever.

Then I became old and soft and demanded comforts. I don't like driving around Dublin and involuntarily seeing the billboards, shops, women, and strutting men. Madhu said, 'See how important drinking has become in life.' If it is not Guinness, it's Harp (or Heineken or Budweiser), and so many pubs. And younger people opting for drugs like cocaine. I am far from it.

"Shelter, shelter, give me shelter. Man putting up new billboard with brush and glue over an old one. One rock concert over . . . one horse show, horse race over . . . June coming to an end.

"When did you arrive in Ireland?"

"May 31st."

"Prove it, show me the stamp on your passport."

"The bastards. Even after we satisfy all requirements, they turn us down on a technicality, and what can you say? They know their job and how to read the rules, and turn you down. But we are rich, comparatively, and not really suffering such a hardship.

"It will be much worse in Kali. No vans and freedom to travel. And you, old-timer, you can't forever go around being honored, even in your modest way. Just give me a private room, I say. Just give me a good lunch. My assistant must take care of affairs. Give me whatever I ask and let me sleep early and don't involve me. Give me plenty of earplugs.

"The world spins and orbits at once, moving and spinning, and yet, everything is steady, by the will of God. He's a person. Supreme. The absolute truth is not impersonal or void. Not a blind chance of Adam's.

"That supreme truth is hard to understand, but one can know it by *bhakti*. Who is the *atma*? Who is the Supreme? It is He whom we must worship.

“6:30 now. Hey, I wrote a letter to our host’s wife. Thank you, gratitude, I mean it. Lie here for five hours and whisper a few dreams. You have Krsna with you. Non-optional, one hour of reading in his books. Maybe I made that quota by preparing for the lecture. What can you do in this place? It’s like being in a room in New Delhi, except I’m not on the way to Vrndavana. I’m in Dublin. Look for something to paste into this book. Six good posters of Prabhupada. I can write down what I see. That’s just as good. Write a letter to God, thank Him for letting me write letters, even here. Whatever He wants, the devotee accepts. If God wants me to suffer, I accept that. Krsna, Krsna, Krsna.

“Brother computer. Macintosh. ‘Hop in’ to the mall. Bach flower remedies on sale. Guitars, Irish postal system in green, red hair bleached, women streaming over the bridge. A devotee I know earns money drawing pictures in colored chalk on the pavement. People throw some money to him. Another devotee is on the dole. Someone else makes sweets and sells them to a health food store.

“‘You worked for GN Press?’ he asked me.

“He wanted to see utility bills. Income tax. I said I never had to pay that. He wanted more proof. He was fairly satisfied, but not quite enough.

“‘You would not qualify,’ he said. What do you mean, *would* not qualify? Say it direct—you *do not* qualify. Stinker. He didn’t care for us. His mind was already drifting to later in the day. Couldn’t expect him to care for us in our Ford Econoline. So, ask us for taxes. Oh, but he was enthusiastic to explain our rights to us and how we could appeal his decision, we had that legal right according to such-and-such law of 1995, and even now he would call the office in Donegal and explain and see if they would overrule him, but as far as he was concerned, ‘You would not qualify. You would be

denied.' Yeah, and you're making it sound okay and that's the way it is. Good day. See you later. All very pleasant.

“You'd better cool down and take rest. It doesn't mean anything. No loss. No loss or gain in this material world. Go on singing the glories of Narayana. In the beginning there was only Narayana – no Siva or Brahma or motor vehicle bureau – only Narayana and so it will be at the end of life. Be in the protection of the Supreme Lord by chanting His holy names. It's alright. You have the best spiritual master and the best process. Please, Srila Prabhupada, let me do what is best. Let me respect and honor your devotees. It will pass – esteem and good looks don't count. Don't mind that yours are fading and fading. Keep alive as much as you can, and the writing is certainly your way. Hare Krsna. That's true.”

(June 24, 1996, Ramanuja dasa's flat, Dublin)