

Free Write Journal #156

August 13, 2021

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Free Writes

50th Anniversary of the Installation of Radha-Gopivallabha

Yesterday I took part by Zoom in the 50th anniversary of Prabhupada's installing Radha-Gopivallabha in the Boston temple in 1971. I was present, and so the 2021 Boston temple president thought it was important that I take part and share some memories. When I searched my memories I found only a few remaining. But as we went on with the Zoom, I discovered that two devotees from the old days, Soma dasa and Sumati dasi, were present, and I could speak back and forth with them. They were initiated during this time. Talking with them was wonderful! They praised me as being the father of the temple, and we exchanged many memories. Soma dasa recalled how his first service was to fix the broken windows in the temple. I remembered well how the teenage toughs threw stones through our windows, and Soma dasa was expert at repairing them. He said his next service was cleaning the pots, and one of the temple *matajis* told him that by cleaning the pots he was cleaning his heart. Sumati dasi, although now an elderly woman, was very cheerful and affectionate in remembering the *sanga* of the various devotees in Boston. We spoke back and forth for about half an hour, and it was delightful. I even rose above my pneumonia and spoke clearly and loudly. I read from Prabhupada's letter to the Boston temple president in which Prabhupada said that the names of the Deities should be Radha-Gopivallabha.

Bathroom

Prabhupada's accommodations in the temple were rustic. He had to share the bathroom with all the other men. He went first, and the others had to wait. But when he walked down the hall dressed in only his *gamsha* and carrying a clean towel and a waterpot, the men devotees would be gathered around the bathroom entrance, and they would chant and call out enthusiastically, "Jaya Prabhupada! Jaya Prabhupada!" Prabhupada seemed to take the cheering in good spirits although it was a little awkward to be cheered to in that circumstance.

Changes in Prabhupada's Books

I received a letter from a devotee in Russia who is confused and doubtful about the Russian translations of Prabhupada's books. This reminded me of the persons who doubt and reject Jayadvaita Maharaja's editing of Srila Prabhupada's books. Jayadvaita Maharaja and Dravida published a booklet, *Responsible Publishing*. In that work, they described their method of editing and demonstrated how they always sought to make any changes that brought the writing back more to what Prabhupada actually intended. They did not make whimsical changes. They pointed out how in earlier editions of Prabhupada's books there was unnecessary and wrongful editing, and they had set out to correct this. *Responsible Publishing* is a very convincing book.

As for translations of Prabhupada into Russian, I cannot read the language, so I cannot comment on its accuracy and responsibility to do it and preserve Srila Prabhupada. When Prabhupada began translating into English, he wrote in his first *Bhagavatams* that there would be doubtless some inaccuracies due to its being written in a foreign language. But he gave the example that if there is a fire in someone's house, the people can make it known to their neighbors even if they don't speak the same language. He also said his *Bhagavatams* would be appreciated by honest men.

Visit by Nurse

We have a plan in which a visiting nurse will come out to the house and examine my vitals, etc., and mainly to listen to my pneumonia and see if it has gotten worse. A few days ago a nurse came and appeared competent. She verified that I had pneumonia and described it as a “nasty infection that takes several weeks to go away” even after a course of anti-biotics. She said a healthy 40-year-old man who gets pneumonia typically will have to stay out of work for weeks. I have been taking anti-biotics, and they are about to run out in a few days. She said I should eat sufficiently and drink liquids and get enough sleep. We told her I get up at 2:00 in the morning. Baladeva said I follow my schedule as a priority over my health. She saw it as favorable that I was sitting up in a chair and my vital signs were normal. She wants me to go out and get an X-ray of my lungs, despite the fact that I am weak and not inclined to go out. The nurse—and Baladeva—impressed upon me the seriousness of pneumonia. Baladeva said it was the number one killer of senior citizens. One gets weakened by some other disease, but then pneumonia kills them.

Lunch Menus

Years ago I made a list of menus I personally approve. There were over twenty varieties in the list. We have had the fortune of an extended visit by an expert Guyanese cook, Nrsimha dasi. Bala from Trinidad was our cook, but now he’s returned from the hospital and is too weak to take on full lunch duties. So Baladeva is the main “*raj bhog*” cooker. I do not especially care for certain international preparations; now we have a chance to rely on my original list, which has more American and Italian food as the offerings.

Love

You have to be open to give love in order to get it. Prabhupada’s famous saying, “If you love me,

then I'll love you." If he had said it to me earlier, I could have been initiated at the first initiation. I needed that nudge. But once he said it, I was ready.

Reading Bhaktivinoda Thakura

I continue reading the books of Bhaktivinoda Thakura. At present I'm reading *Vaisnava-ninda* (*Criticism of Vaisnavas*). Bhaktivinoda Thakura distinguishes the different types of devotees. He says that one who has pure love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead and who maintains a friendship with the Lord's devotees is always callous to those who envy Krsna and Krsna's devotees (p. 79). Such a person is considered to be an intermediate devotee. He becomes a first class devotee when in the course of advancing in devotional service, he feels an intimate relationship with all living entities, seeing them as part and parcel of the Supreme Person. Bhaktivinoda Thakura describes the beginner devotee as one who worships the Deity in the temple but has little respect or love for the devotees. His faith can be easily overcome by nondevotee philosophy.

Talks Between Krsna and Rukmini

Rukmini was Krsna's most submissive wife. She never became envious or anxious when Krsna showed favor to another of His wives. Krsna wanted to see Rukmini become angry, so He spoke to her with joking words. He told her that He was not a worthy match for her as a husband. The other kings like Sisupala were much more worthy than Krsna. Krsna began to minimize Himself. He said He was a poor beggar and a vagabond. He said He was a coward, and that is why He built the Dvaraka fort to live in. He told Rukmini that she should better divorce Him and find a more suitable mate. Rukmini took these words seriously, and she became devastated. She finally fell to the floor unconscious. Krsna then saw that she was taking everything He said seriously, so He came down beside her and pacified her with kind words, telling her that she was His most beloved and He was speaking in joking words just to see her become angry. Rukmini became satisfied with Krsna's

consoling words, and she began to speak to Him truthfully and cheerfully. She said, “My dear Krsna, none of the other competitors for my hand was worthy to marry me.” She said Krsna’s building the city of Dvaraka was not because He was afraid—everyone is afraid of Krsna. He just wanted to protect His devotees from the attacks of demons. Thus Krsna and Rukmini became reconciled and returned to their normal restful natures.

The Garbageman and *Prasadam*

Every Wednesday a young man, Dick, comes by to pick up our garbage. We wait for his arrival and run out to give him *prasadam*. He doesn’t have an adventuresome tongue but likes the cookies, chips and a bottle of soda. He has been steadily taking *prasadam* for four or five months. Surely it must have some spiritual effect on him. Just last week we put in his lunch bag a copy of Srila Prabhupada’s *The Science of Self-Realization*. So today we’ll have to see if he has read any of it and what is his reaction to it. We are hoping he has some positive reaction to reading Prabhupada’s book.

Jayanta and Onions

Jayanta sent me a poem how he likes to eat onions and garlic. I wrote him back and said Vaisnavas don’t eat such food which is pungent and in the mode of passion. They like to offer what Krsna likes, a fruit, a leaf, water, as well as milk and milk products mixed with honey or sugar.

A Photo from the Past

Bali Maharaja says he has a photograph of me taken in the 1990s in Hawaii. He says my disciples would like it because I look so young. While I was writing these list items Baladeva went downstairs to see if he could see something interesting. He came back and said the prodigal son (Purusa) was up by 4:30 A.M. and was chanting his beads with serious intent. That is a worthy news

item for our daily events in Viraha Bhavan.

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

pp.37-38

“Questions by the Sages”

“When I first came to Prabhupada, this absolute presentation attracted me. He was not overbearing about it, yet he left no room to compromise. It’s difficult to explain what Prabhupada was like in those days. He was soft, elderly, wise, humble, and inviting. He was surrounded by an aura of kindness, gentility, and mendicant poverty. Even we could see that he depended on Krsna. When he spoke, however, he was absolute. It’s inconceivable how we, who were so relative and eclectic, were able to accept what Prabhupada said.

“I remember thinking at the beginning that Prabhupada could teach a different spiritual book every week. After I attended my first *Bhagavad-gita* class, I asked one of the other students what book he would speak on the next week. I suggested he might like to speak on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. ‘No, Swamiji says everything’s in the *Bhagavad-gita*.’ I accepted that quickly. How could we accept Prabhupada’s absoluteness? It is inconceivable, it is only his mercy.”

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p.40

“One must question the *Bhagavatam* speaker with respect to elicit the clear meaning. There is a difference between listening alertly just to find the speaker’s faults and listening alertly to understand the absolute truth from a speaker whom we trust.

Both listeners may ask questions, but the first listener will challenge and the second will ask with respect. It is recommended that we adopt the second mood.

“It is inevitable that at the beginning of our spiritual lives, our true inquiries may be mixed with challenge. The speaker may consider our challenging doubtfulness as a sign of intelligence. If we are sincere about hearing, however, we soon learn to follow a certain etiquette of politeness and respect in asking our questions, and the challenge is overcome by trust. Lord Caitanya said, ‘Etiquette is the ornament of a devotee.’ We learn to inquire gently, to admit our doubts without false ego. Prabhupada invited us to ask our questions with logic and argument. If we present our question within the bounds of etiquette, the spiritual master may feel more obliged to respond.

“If the questioner accompanies his inquiry with acts of service, he will come more quickly to accept the spiritual master. He may then continue to present himself as foolish or ignorant, but one with a spiritual master knows everything because by his loving relationship with the guru, his doubts can easily be cleared. We see this in the relationship between Krsna and Arjuna on the battlefield. Prabhupada says that as friends, their talks were not helping Arjuna to overcome doubt. As friends, their opinions had equal weight. When Arjuna saw that his opinions did not relieve his grief, however, he surrendered: *Sisyas te ’ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam*: ‘Please instruct me.’

“We cannot expect to ask questions from a vacant heart. We can report on the sounds we hear in the hallway of the Krsna-Balaram Guesthouse—a young child’s chatter echoing, and outside, a distant *bhajana*. Suta was offered the guru’s seat, but we were not there. I was present, however, when Prabhupada was first offered a *vyasasana* (a big upholstered chair). Therefore, we direct our praises toward him.

“That’s not unnatural. One *sadhu* here in Vrndavana warned me that ISKCON

devotees overdo their praise of Prabhupada. He said that we keep ourselves separate from the *sampradaya* because we praise Prabhupada so much. He also said that Prabhupada's true glory was that he was a humble servant of the *parampara*—one of many such humble servants. I don't agree. Srila Prabhupada's contribution was extraordinary. He did what no one else could do. I feel he allows me to write in his wake.”

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pp.44-45

“Prabhupada states more qualifications for the *gosvami* who is eligible to speak the *Bhagavatam*. He doesn't exclude people, but trains as many as possible as representatives of Vyasadeva and Suta Gosvami. He does not expect us to be able to speak as *maha-bhagavatas*, but he establishes the minimum requirements in this purport: we must be free from the four major vices of Kali-yuga and be well-versed in all the revealed scriptures. He mentions the *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and adds, ‘The *acarya* or *gosvami* must be well acquainted with all of these literatures.’

“Prabhupada did not translate the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*, nor did he necessarily encourage us to study them thoroughly. Simply by reading Prabhupada's books, we can assimilate the essence of the histories and important Vedas. For us, we may define “well-versed in all revealed scriptures“ as meaning well-versed in the verses of the books he gave us and his Bhaktivedanta purports.

“There are qualifications for the audience too. The audience should be controlled enough to only hear from the right source. If someone is speaking with questionable connection to the *parampara*, we should not hear from him. In reference to reading the scriptures, Prabhupada states, ‘To hear and explain them is more important than

reading them.’ This means that we have to understand scripture by having it explained to us by an *acarya*. Unless I hear the *Bhagavatam* or other books explained by Prabhupada, I don’t feel I can invest the same simple sincerity and trust.

“The principle of faithfulness to hearing from the spiritual master is not an introductory instruction but something that becomes more and more important as we enter deeper into Krsna consciousness. Ultimately we have to become fixed in hearing from someone who can guide us in a particular mood with a particular emphasis. We are not looking to have only a superficial grasp on scriptural knowledge, but to please Krsna with our sastric conviction,. We want to realize the fruit of Krsna consciousness.

“To recite the *Bhagavatam*, we need to know Lord Krsna; He is the goal of Vedic study. Who knows Him? We all know Him. If we chant Hare Krsna, regularly read the scriptures, avoid sinful life, and repeat whatever we have heard in *parampara* without adding to it or subtracting from it, we can carry the same torch Suta Gosvami passed down to the sages: the torch of Krsna consciousness in the dark age of Kali.”

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pp.46-47

“I may be a poor man, which signifies that I am spiritually humble and bereft of *ruci* (Prabhupada used to call us ‘poor students’). But poor doesn’t mean deliberately sinful or somehow not honorable in our speech.

“You see, that’s where my problem lies. Sometimes I have something in my mind and I need to speak out about it or unburden it. Can I talk it out with friends? I mean, do I always have to be a perfect speaker?

“You know what I mean. I am an ordinary fellow. I need to speak in a friendly way among my friends, even though my speech isn’t always perfect. We all assume that we

want to be perfect. Therefore I want to expand the field of what we may write in a book offered to devotees. This is daring and the source of my fear and trembling. I dare to extend the boundaries and include what hasn't been included by the perfect *acaryas* in their books, their perfect *sastras*. That's what's on my mind and the main point behind the 'extra' in this poor man's writing."

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p. 49

"It was long ago when Saunaka and the sages thanked Suta Gosvami and invited him to speak on the *Bhagavatam*. First, Vyasadeva wrote his three prelude verses which clarified the topic: Sri Krsna, the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura stated that *janmadyasya*, the source of all, includes the source of *adi-rasa*, conjugal love. And Prabhupada hammered at once on the atheists in his purport. We get ready to go with them into *Bhagavatam-katha*. Now the stage is set where we can include ourselves and feel welcome among the sages at Naimisaranya, where everyone hears the speaker submissively. Of course, for us, submissive hearing means accepting Prabhupada and his purports as our guide in the life of *sadhana-bhakti* he gave us.

"Here we are in the morning in the perpetual cycle of days, for as much time as we have left in our life. We don't have 'sahasra' (one thousand) years left at our disposal. Maharaja Pariksit had only seven days. Please speak, Suta Gosvami. We are eager to hear.

"I read again the qualifications one must have before he can dare sit on the *vyasasana*, but my mind flips off to a letter I have to write, a piece of luggage I have to pack, and the *chaukidar* knocking his stick against the gate outside. I hear a *bhajana* in

the distance, and the sound floats this way as unclear as fog. Shall I try again to think about a *gosvami*'s qualifications, or should I try to pick up another thread?

“He not only should be freed from all such vices, but must also be well-versed in all revealed scriptures or in the Vedas.’ Srila Prabhupada is concerned not only with the historical Suta Gosvami of 5000 years ago but with the continuation of *Bhagavatam* recital today. He wants us to qualify ourselves to speak it. It’s not impossible. We simply have to follow the four rules, give up sinful life, and know the conclusion of Prabhupada’s books. (The essential Vaisnava *smṛti* gathered from all *śrutis*, *smṛtis*, and previous commentaries are poured out sweetly from his experience.) Be with Prabhupada and enter the topics of the spotless *Purana*.

“Suta was qualified. We must not remain unqualified. Study the books, hear them explained, and then write. As Srila Prabhupada said of himself, ‘Because I was good at hearing (*śravanam*), now I am good at *kirtana* (glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa and the *sankīrtana* movement of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu).”

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pp. 51-52

“Suta Gosvami is praised as the seniormost learned Vedantist. He is acquainted with Vyāsadeva and other sages, the leaders of ancient India’s *sat-darsanas*, six philosophies. Most of them are materialistic or atheistic. They give little importance to the cause of all causes.

“The *Srīmad-Bhagavatam* speaker, however, is expected to know these six philosophies before he can sit on the *vyāsasana* and ‘present fully the conclusions of the *Bhagavatam* in defiance of all other systems.’ We learned about them from Prabhupada.

“I remember from my BBT Library Party days when Professor Troy Organ of Ohio State University read this line in a book we had given him for review. He objected to what he considered Prabhupada’s sectarianism. He didn’t like it that Prabhupada defied all teachers other than those who taught the pure *Bhagavatam*. The professor believed in neutrality in the name of scholarship. But we are not interested in neutrality. We want to go back to Godhead. We want peace and accord among all people. Since five out of six of the Indian philosophies defy God, how can we not defy them? *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is God’s book *par excellence*, and we must know how to defend it.”

“. . . How can you become wise if you are dogmatists? How can you have the power to discern what is true and right?

By knowing Krsna, one knows everything. *Yasmin vijnate sarvam, evam vijnatam bhavati*: ‘If one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the controller of all controllers, one can understand everything else.’ Krsna also assures Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gita* that if he simply hears from the Lord, he will learn everything noumenal and phenomenal.

Srila Prabhupada took this approach. He rarely refused to answer a question on any topic, although he freely admitted and he did not know the teachings of every philosopher or that he was not a trained scientist. However, if Prabhupada heard the name of a Western philosopher unfamiliar to him, he would say, ‘What is his philosophy?’ As soon as he got a handle on the philosophy, he would respond to it from his context of the absolute truth as presented in the Vaisnava *parampara*.”

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“Andre Breton, a surrealist poet, wrote,

“Put yourself in as passive, or receptive, a state of mind as you can. Forget about your genius, your talents, and the talents of everyone else. Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest roads that leads to everything. Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you’ve written and be tempted to re-read what you have written. The first sentence will come spontaneously, so compelling is the truth that with every passing second there is a sentence unknown to our consciousness which is only crying out to be heard. It is somewhat of a problem to form an opinion about the next sentence; it doubtlessly partakes both of our conscious activity and the other . . . Go on as long as you like. Put your trust in the inexhaustible nature of the murmur.’

“I like the idea of writing like that. I have a desire, which I hope is Krsna conscious coming to write not just from the mind—the flickering or academic student’s brain—but directly from the arm-body, ‘the unconscious,’ and then to dovetail it with the Supreme consciousness, with Krsna’s purpose. Can I connect with Krsna and not with the demon babblers within?

“If you paint over the surface as fast as you can, you eventually get bored. Better to go deeper, or rather, more toward the unconscious.”

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“‘Thank you.’ False
 words. I am going now, make a quick
 exit out side gate. I couldn’t
 see or attain Vrndavana, but I am
 bringing the dirt from my room
 where I claim Krsna and His angels
 of mercy told me to write
A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam.

“I prayed and tried, and this is what came. Why deny it? Take it. It’s Vrndavana
 dust. I craved the authorization for my imagination to be used in Krsna’s service. I want
 to say, ‘This is the form given to me to preach to people at this time, and I’m only an
 instrument.’

“It’s my whole self. As WCW wrote in *Kora*
in Hell: ‘The imagination . . .
 delights in its own seasons,
 reversing the usual order at will.’”

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p. 70

“I want to go to a list I made of words and expressions of things I care about. I
 want to hold them up to the scripture and say, ‘How does this look in the light of the
Bhagavatam?’

“Making a list is a writing technique, but it’s also useful for clearing one’s thoughts. I listed names: Hayagriva, Rupanuga, Brahmananda. Who knows, I might develop enough courage to say something from that list.

“Right now, though, I want to bid adieu to the ancient churches dredged up from the unconscious memory. Let me say goodbye to Vrndavana before it’s too late. I am in Vrndavana only a few hours more. Unfortunately, I can’t stay. There are just too many people here who want to see me.

“I am on my way, but I want to remember Vrndavana. I am bringing photos of Krsna-Balaram, Radha-Syamasundara and Gaura-Nitai.

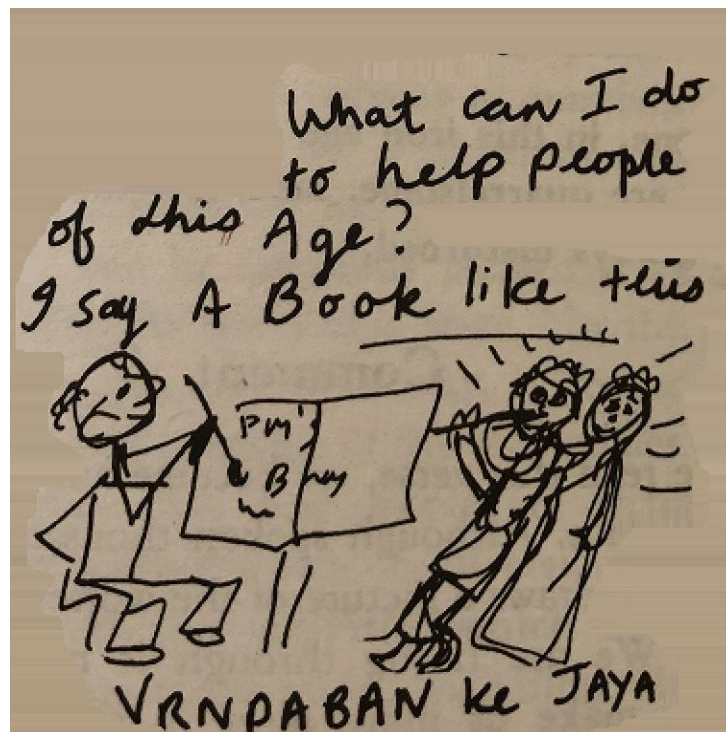
“Unseen spirits of Vrndavana known only to pure devotees, please bless me and Madhu and Samika Rsi and our taxi driver as we make our way to the next place.

“I won’t say goodbye,
but please be with me as I
travel. I won’t say, ‘I failed
to be in Vrndavana,’ but I will
continue to try.

“The next verse describes people’s condemned affairs in the age. You see these ‘affairs’ every time you travel west. Do you want to save them? Do you have such nobility? We used to go out on the streets to beat drums and chant Hare Krsna. We thought that would save them. We still think that, although the city councils rarely agree.

“Angels of mercy
came to our
Room, #42

and gave us
 ideas and blessings
 for this book
 Jan 1996
 I leave today
 promising
 to always
 continue it.



“What can I do
 to help people
 of this age?
 I say a book like this.
 Vrndavana ki jaya!”

p. 77

“It’s a bad age. A hard rain’s
going to fall.

What did you see of it?

Want to broadcast your vision, poet?

No, I am only scratching here.

The truth is another saying.

Odes are for Krsna worship.

“It’s late in Kali. Jagadisa

Maharaja is spending the year

at Saranagati to show us

how to live on whatever food

they produce in the mountain

valley, although the men

are new to farming.

I set an example of a writer

wandering. Plan to travel in

a Kali-yuga Ford to cities and

campgrounds and hide in the back

of the van, cursing disco music

when I hear it,

hiding in someone’s

home and spying on America.

“Kali needs *harinama*, needs to
 see Prabhupada’s books distributed
 (and a few of mine).
 Kali needs to die to sin,
 needs the mask of education
 removed and the real thing established—
 songs to Krsna,
 English and Sanskrit in
 learned God consciousness.

“Is ISKCON up to the task?
 Give us a few moonlike
 devotees, not hordes of
 insignificant, faraway stars.
 Lord Caitanya’s moon is rising.
 If only they don’t drop the bombs.
 Even then
 it’s predicted.
 Devotees like the sages
 come to cities with *Bhagavatams* but seem overrun.
 Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said just one *pujari*
 ringing the bell at noon *arati*
 when no one attends the *darsana*
 of Radha and Krsna
 has more value than all the

hospitals and welfare workers in the world.

Pray for Kali's redemption.

“I have no preconceived subject, but I have holes in my right hand glove where I have worn it away by vigorous chanting.”

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p. 80

Burnt ashes of smithy
 burnt what it read,
 with a poker, sift through
 clever Shredded Wheat
 junk food. My companion
 and I happy for another day.
 We ought to be able to tell you something.
 When we chant and when
 we walk outdoors,
 it's blissful to be simple in *brahmacari khadi*
 and avoiding sin as far as possible.
 I want to leave a record against the
 swollen tide of madness.
 Our bodies aren't happy
 but our hearts sing in the simple
 joy of accomplishment
 under our master's plan.

We'd like to study at least.
I can't let loose.
What's the sense
of indulging in the madness of
incoherent speech? As for
evil and torture of Kali,
You know it or heard it
and don't want to hear more.
You turn your face away.
Give us peace, you say.
Give us frosted Apple Jacks
and our *TV Guide*.
Give us a moment of awareness,
a life, absolved
of bad karma, and a chance
to go back to Godhead
'Where will your disciples
be?' The mad poet asked,
when hearing of Kali's worsening
from A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.
He replied, 'They will
be with Krsna.'
We sure hope so."

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

pp. 26-27

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura's song is the end-of-life summary confession of a wicked man. Are such men rare, or are we all like that? You can decide for yourself, but as Bhaktivinoda Thakura continues to sing, we begin to suspect that maybe he is referring to us. It's almost too late to reform—we are just too worn out and wasted by material life. When will we pour out our own tale of grief before the Supreme Lord?

“Hear, O Lord, my story of sadness.’ Now Bhaktivinoda Thakura is directly requesting the Lord's audience. His is not a purposeless lament. We need to fall before Krsna with our troubles, our self inflicted woes, and admit to Him how we have failed to become devotees.

“A man who gets this far into *Saranagati* is pious enough to believe in God. Atheists don't feel regret, at least not for failing to have served God. If they do feel regret, they either accuse God or blame other people for the corruption in their own souls. A pious man is confident that Krsna hears him.

“Admitting our wretchedness is not quite in the spiritual dimension—it's not above the modes of nature—but it is an essential prerequisite, a sub-religious principle. If we think we are at a more transcendental stage, yet we haven't experienced remorse for our failings, then we may be wrong.

“How can a *sannyasi* with disciples of his own turn back and confess his sins? It's too embarrassing. It's incongruous. We'd like to do it, but for various reasons we hesitate.”

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pp-54-55

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura is claiming a lot. He has held the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord to his head. Those same lotus feet were attained by Laksmi-devi only after severe austerities. Only when he attained a place at the Lord's feet did Lord Siva attain auspiciousness. And like Brahma and Narada. Bhaktivinoda Thakura says he too has surrendered at the soles of those feet and thus become free of misery.

“What can I say? He who was singing the opening songs has already attained the *param-gati*, which even great souls do not attain before many lifetimes of *bhajana*. He wants us to follow him, but I don't know if I can. The most I seem to be able to do is honor him.

“How are these songs going to affect me? That is also Bhaktivinoda Thakura's concern. He is writing them for us. He wants the songs to deliver us the joy of *saranagati*. He is an *acarya*.

“My dear Bhaktivinoda Thakura, I cannot attain so quickly what you have attained. I know it's not so easily gained. We can read *Bhagavad-gita* in an hour and see Arjuna go from doubt to *saranagati*. We can read *Brhad-bhagavatamrta* and instantly traverse many lifetimes of Brahma with Gopa-kumara until he finally returns to Goloka Vrndavana. We can read *Jaiiva Dharma* and observe as the guru asks his disciples what *rasa* they prefer. None of these things take long to read, but it took lifetimes for these devotees to reach their goal.

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura's complete surrender takes place within a relatively few stanzas. He is teaching us the way, how it will happen, what to expect when we

faithfully practice Krsna consciousness with determination. But it's not going to happen today.

“God’s command is all-powerful. In fear of Him the wind blows, and the sun, moon and all others perform their allotted duties. He’s Supreme above all and lives in the heart of His loving devotees. Whomever He protects, no one can kill. ‘O Lord, Your eternal servant Bhaktivinoda has bowed down at Your lotus feet. O master, he cherishes the faith that You will surely protect him from all dangers.’ (*Saranagati*, 4.2.5)”

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

pp.245-46

“I want to be aware that I have the capability to participate in my own spiritual life. I am not completely helpless. Although the mind has millions and millions of times gone away from paying attention to the holy name and has brought up all these foolish memories and fantasies and lines of thought, I have the innate capability to do something about it. I just have to be hopeful.

“I want to have a more spiritual relationship and friendship with my mind. The mind is not just a subject for psychoanalysis, although I may use that technique sometimes. Another technique I may use is *argument ad baculum*, the broom and the stick.

“Ultimately, though, I hope to get the mind’s voluntary cooperation.

“Dear mind, do you like these propositions that are given to us by Raghunatha dasa Gosvami? Would you like to practice *raganuga-sadhana-bhakti* in this lifetime? Would you like to accept Svarupa Damodara, Rupa Gosvami, Sanatana Gosvami, and

other great devotees as your *siksa-gurus*? You can become their disciple. In fact, the mind's place is very important in *bhava-seva*. Therefore, our devotional service is sometimes called *manasa-seva*. All these sweet practices and attainments can be ours—if you will kindly worship and work as I am advising, following the words of *Manah-siksa*.”

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From ***One Hundred Prabhupada Poems***

pp.68-69

“ . . . Don't work without the guru's order.
 A news reporter in Delhi asked you,
 ‘Does a disciple ever disagree with
 a guru on a spiritual matter?’ Your answer:
 ‘Not unless he’s a fool!
 A damn fool!’
 They have heard the guru has an eternal
 form, and of course that means he has
 a *rasa* in Vraja and he may
 also have an eternal *rasa* with
 Lord Caitanya in Navadvipa.
 Maybe . . . don't speculate.
 I follow you as I saw you and
 as I hear you.
 Please accept my service,
 poor as it is.”

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

pp.20-21

“We stopped. The rickshaw driver said he had to do something for a minute. He left his new shoes on the road and walked off. Then a motorized rickshaw honked that we were in the way. Someone pushed our rickshaw back so the motorized rickshaw could pass. Then a car ran over our rickshaw driver’s shoes. Finally he came back. During this time, my Godbrother and I spoke confidentially about our hopes to attain spiritual life. Yes, I will keep reading *krsna-katha* and aspiring. I don't mean at all to say that I am hopeless. I just wanted to report, however, that usually when I reach a holy place or temple and I have the opportunity to pray, I go blank. Not blank exactly, but I get stripped of flowery words or higher aspirations connected with that holy place. All I have left to say is, ‘Prabhupada, I am here. I am nothing but your disciple and I am glad that I am some kind of devotee. Please help me to do better. *Nama om ... Hare Krsna Hare Krsna . . .*’ Nothing more than that. And after a few minutes, I am ready to go back.

“I have heard that prayer deepens in concentric circles. There is the verbal level where the mind is uncontrolled. That is no prayer at all. Then there is prayer engaging the mind and voice. Deeper still there is prayer with mind, voice, and heart, and then prayer of the heart, the whole self. Some Godbrothers who live in Vrndavana do *dandavat parikramas*, continually prostrating themselves in the dust of Vrndavana. It is difficult, but after a while your bodily concerns become inconsequential, your mind surrenders, and your prayer becomes wholehearted. That’s the state I want to achieve.”

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From *Last Days of the Year*

pp.138-39

“I think the wood is catching on. Flames don't jump so high just from kindling, do they? I just read the chapter ‘Wild Mind.’ Let yourself go into the wild mind which is the equivalent to unconsciousness. She says don't allow that one little dot of consciousness—which is your present conscious mind—tell you that you can't write, this isn't coming out well, it ought to be something else, it's not going to be the greatest book ever, etc. Just go and write as you want to.

“Dear Lord Krsna, I have an extra factor these writers are not aware of. It's most important. It is that I want to please the Supreme by what I do. And I don't want to waste this human form of life which should be used for serving Krsna and thus reviving our original nature. There is more than staring into the void and stepping into ‘wild mind.’ There is devotional mind, there is standing before God with the mind in the heart (as Theophan would put it), or as we say it, meditating on the lotus feet of Krsna and serving Him by serving His pure devotees. What about that? How does that fit in with ‘the unconscious?’ How does that fit in writing what you want and notes on the last days of the year?

“Ah, that's a nice fire. Stay with it while it lasts, just two logs, but they're going now. I'm alone. See the sheep distant from here. The green, marshy fields. Now every day, whether it's actually raining or now, the ground is always wet and muddy and puddly, pocked with the imprints of sheep feet and cow's prints and tractor tires, and I add to it with my patient circumambulation twice a day. Tramp, tramp, Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, the mind comes back to His name and then goes off again. Where is the heart? Don't you know? Yes, they say it is where your feelings are. Then go ahead and

place your feelings for Krsna there. I do it but then fly off and I think about this and that . . . my mind goes to New York and I'm talking with the devotees as I probably will in a week from now . . . Or I'm writing a letter. Or feeling how I don't want to write a letter. Go to do tasks whether you like it or not. And today's 'Notes' seem like another thing I wasn't so keen about, when I thought of it while walking on the bog.

“Fire is mystery. You look at it, better than a T.V. show but similar in some ways, a heating abstract show. Full of glow and movement, and it draws in your mind. You turn away from it and look out the window. How different that is, the hill and the blue-stained sheep down there. The fire is right at hand and draws you in, the other view draws you out. And here you are in the middle of it, yourself, *jiva* in the body.”

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From ***Breaking the Silence***

pp.90-91

“In Search of the Grand Metaphor

“So metaphors serve as ways to express Krsna's transcendental qualities. They are offerings made by sincere souls dedicated to serving and praising Him. We also describe devotees by using metaphors. Their minds are clear like the sky in autumn when there are only white clouds. Their minds are like candlelight in a windless place. Their mercy is compared to an ocean, *krpa-sindhu*. They are like *kalpa-vrksa* trees, awarding whatever we desire. They are as soft as roses, but sometimes as hard as thunderbolts.

“Do I dare speak in my own voice about Lord Sri Krsna? I'm not so competent. That is one reason I seem to write more of myself than of God. I am a fool and there is no harm in splashing ink as I tell of my patched career. But I cannot draw a funny

looking cartoon of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is not a joke or plaything, at least not for me. (The *gopis* sometimes treat Him that way, but they are completely and eternally pure. They have already passed through the fire of ordeal in order to become His paramour lovers.)”

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From ***Calling Out to Srila Prabhupada: Poems and Prayers***

pp.51-52

“Daily Prayer”

“My dear Lord Krsna,
 I once read a ‘prayer’ by Sankara
 who asked You to forgive him
 for presuming to pray to You, since, he said,
 ‘You are ultimately the impersonal One.’
 I also ask for forgiveness,
 for presuming to pray
 since I have so little realization.
 I am not a Mayavadi,
 but neither am I a *bhakta*.
 I pray You'll honor the spark
 of faith and affection
 that has somehow been kindled in me
 by His Divine Grace, Srila Prabhupada.
 All glories to You
 who rules all,

whose energy is supreme in all the universes,
 whose one breath as Maha-Visnu is the duration of the universe,
 who likes to be subordinate to the love of mother Yasoda,
 who bewilders the *jnanis* so that they argue,
 and who appears in their arguments as logic and illusion,
 but who is ultimately satisfied only by loving service.

“All glories to Your pure devotees
 and may I become more faithful to them,
 may I serve them without reservation and without demand.
 You know my demands and doubts; today I pray,
 take them away, Lord Hari.”

(24 May 1988)

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From ***Dear Sky: Letters from a Sannyasi***

pp.80-81

“July 15 Wicklow

Dear friends,

This morning the clouds were so low they came right down to the trees. It's the darkest morning yet. The summer isn't going to last forever. Gradually the sun will rise later and later.

“In the darkness the lighted schoolhouse was bright and yellow. I knew that Prabhupada dasa was there chanting his *japa*, and I thought he might see me as I passed by.

It's nice to have everything in its place, to walk at the same time every day, to be part of Krsna's universe, where under His control birds sing and evergreens whisper. Nothing is topsy-turvy, although it can become so if Krsna gives the nod to Lord Siva to begin his dance of destruction. But we hanker for the peaceful maintenance of the Lord. Within that maintenance, Krsna gives us a certain life-duration and a quota of sense enjoyment, and we fill our life with *rajo-guna* activities. We *jivas* basically waste our time trying to establish ourselves permanently in a temporary place. That's the civilization we live in. Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. But Prabhupada has come on Lord Caitanya's order to tell us that this world is false, that by chanting Hare Krsna we can realize the real."

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Writing Sessions

From *Dublin Pieces* (June 1996)

"#9)

"10:15 A.M.

"I'm tired but will write to you. Went to a bookstore after the class. Class went well, lots of questions about service. Listened to the music of their Irish voices. Stopped a little after nine, then Manu and Syamananda went with me. Manu picked the store as good for poetry, but it wasn't. They had a lot of Irish poets, but I don't know Muldoon from Montague. So it was like a brick wall, and I didn't know what to pick. The 'international poets' section was tiny. I turned down Lorca and went for Don Marquis, etc. Meanwhile, Syamananda was looking for diaries. He got one by a British woman who sailed all around the world by herself in her sailboat and kept a diary. I

almost got that but didn't. I turned down a book on the role of memory in writing, etc., but I accepted a book on hermits, a soft spot for me.

“Now back to here to resume the balance of the day. I enter ‘my’ room, and Ramanuja is working on the COM computer while Madhu has the *Yellow Pages* open and talking to someone about recharging a battery.

“I wrote a letter to Manu about my writing for July. We agree I should turn to it as a friend, as relief from my other duties. He thought the theme would or won't develop by itself and I should just flow with it. The itinerary is itself interesting—the people and place—provided I can write honestly and deeply on it. Maybe I should have taken that diary by the woman who sailed around the world and see myself as a sailor. No, that's artificial. Just row on. One more full day tomorrow, where you lecture on God as *caitya-guru*.

“What is a pure devotee?’ he asked. And another asked, ‘What is a hypocrite?’ I told: *mad-gata-prana*, preach among yourselves.

“Hare Krsna poet in a bookstore.

O, when the words come flowing and we can convince some
people

This piece is doomed to be short.”

“(June 26, 1996, Dublin flat)”

#10)

“Krsna *anarpita*. God teaches even the slow student. That's what *Bg.* 10.10 says, and 10.11 says how He does it. The devotee who may not be learned, who can't grasp what his guru teaches, cannot understand the philosophy of the *Gita* – but he works sincerely with love – to him Krsna gives knowledge.

“But I thought He only talked to a very advanced devotee.’ I don’t know about talking to, but you just read the purport to *Gita* 10.10 and you will see. Krsna says He helps those who are sincere but not intelligent. He gives them intelligence (*buddhi-yoga*) to come to Him. Yawn and eat and frown and surrey.

“You looked at books. Got one called *Poetry, My Arse!* and I told you the rest. Oh-oh.

“It is pretentious and presumptuous of me to consider I have knowledge of the city. All I know is the walk to the preaching center in the morning and the angelic devotees and the guy in the room over my head and a few other things. You sure don’t know, but you can dream. Many dreams come, but I don’t dare record them in this person’s house. I’m going to tell it straight in July, names and places.

“When we drive off, I’ll say,
 Dublin, you stink but you have
 provided some place for chanters
 and you have heard a little,
 more must be done to penetrate your
 heart. Young, earnest people can
 do it.

“So dreary-bleary-eyed right now, I can’t think straight or write. God be with us.”

“(June 26, 1996, Dublin flat)”

#11)

“For a while I was attached to the idea that I’d write all July in the back of the van. This meant I’d actually have to live there. What if the van wasn’t ready? Now it doesn’t matter how much time I spend in the van. The important thing is to write. And that should be in a relaxed way, turning to a friend during a month that will sometimes be stressful. No need to add to the pressure by demanding that I follow a certain form or live in a certain place.

“Write and collect the pieces. The title will come. The theme is not one to be shaped in advance. Some of this is also true of this little one of Dublin. I saw myself looking at a rack of Dublin tourist postcards today, thinking maybe to paste some into this book. Then I read an introduction by a Dublin poet and realized that I know nothing of the life of this city – and why should I even pretend to? This is not a *Dubliners*. Granted, we had an interesting encounter with the gent in the motor vehicle department and true, it was pleasant, walking through the early morning streets, but my life is . . . what it is. Besides, even ‘my life’ can’t be ultimate expression or theme. I’m passing through, giving the teachings as in the morning *Bhagavad-gita* classes. Tomorrow I’ll speak how God enlightens us in the heart, how to come to Him if we are sincere. It happens inconceivably. He gives intelligence and memory. So . . . this is possible and happening.

“I like to catch their interest and sometimes see it in their faces. Sometimes they look bored and a million miles away. Relax and speak and hope you yourself will *care* for what you are repeating and explaining.

“*Dublin Pieces*, because it is written in this city. Don’t have to ask anyone if you are Krsna conscious. Just see it in yourself, if you want sex desire—or what is it you want? One devotee asked after class, ‘What about greed for service?’ I said material greed is not good, but *lauilyam* to serve Krsna is good.

“Pieces. Not a whole. Or pieces of a whole that is beyond me at present. Filling in the mosaic of life. Working on a big scale. Little at a time.

“All I get is pieces. Fragments.

“Krsna conscious drops. I hope, I hope, and wait and then don’t wait any longer but say whatever comes. Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna.”

“(June 26, 1996, afternoon, Dublin flat)”

#12)

“*Pieces* seems to be winding down as our time diminishes in this town. One more day. Hare Krsna. Someone writes to me asking how to make good Krsna conscious insights, more than merely ‘passing fads’? I will say what? Try, try. Renew. Reform. Start up again. Maybe you can’t do it once and for all, never to have dust accumulate again. Be willing to do it every day. That kind of advice I can give.

“Syama dasa had picked up a thick anthology on memory. I said, ‘No, I have enough books.’ But later I sent him back to get it. Scientists and others on memory. But a simple thing I might do– the writing exercise *I remember* followed by *I don’t remember*. Try it often and go back as far or as recently as you desire. I keep thinking of what to use in July. The Dublin bookstore. Fred Hann’s celebrating Bloomsday.”

“(June 26, 1996, afternoon, Dublin flat)”

END OF DUBLIN PIECES