

Free Write Journal #158

August 27, 2021

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Free Writes

Reality Check

Our recent addition at Viraha Bhavan has been big strong Purusa dasa. But now from so much lifting up of my body, he has developed a sharp pain in his back. Recently he has been going to see the chiropractor, but now the chiropractor is going on a family vacation for at least ten days. Purusa wears a back support all the time, and we don't know what shape he'll be in when his chiropractor returns. Bala from Trinidad has cancer in his lungs. His wife, Krsna dasi, has returned from her stay in Trinidad, and that will be a big help, both for Bala and the Deity worship. Bhakti Rasa and his wife Kirtida are trying to get into the country to become good helpers at Viraha Bhavan. Baladeva has health issues, but he's plugging on and seeing doctors. I myself am still weak from pneumonia but recovering and taking an extra-potent pill for Parkinson's disease. Our team does not include young men and women, but we're pulling on as best we can.

Krsna Dasi Returns

After two months in Trinidad caring for her husband's mother, who is suffering after a major heart attack and needs constant care. Krsna dasi arranged for a caretaking team that allowed her to return to Viraha Bhavan. She went immediately from arduous travel on a midnight flight, and arrived in New York just before a predicted hurricane. She and her companions left early to avoid the full

storm, but they were caught in heavy rainfall and had to travel slowly. Coming all the way from constant care of Bala's mother, Krsna dasi immediately plunged into caring for her husband Bala, who had a high fever and was exhausted from having a hard time breathing. Krsna dasi was herself exhausted, but she put all her energy and attention into caring for her husband. I am hoping to see her today sometime.

False Incarnations

I heard a lecture given by Srila Prabhupada in September 1976 at Vrndavana. He spoke strongly against false incarnations of God. He elaborated on the contemporary of Krsna on this earth, the man who claimed himself to be Vasudeva. This man wrote Krsna a letter and demanded that He give up His personal paraphernalia and surrender Himself to "Vasudeva." His name was Paundraka, and he dressed himself with cheap clothing imitative of Krsna, and he even took on two artificial arms so that he was four-handed like Visnu. Krsna became angry with this cheater, and He immediately went to confront him in battle. When Krsna saw the imitative Vasudeva and his false appearance, the original Personality of Godhead laughed loudly. But He was angry at Paundraka's imitation, and He killed him with His Sudarsana *cakra*.

In recent times there have been many false incarnations who have claimed to be God. Sometimes they get a following from innocent people. But they can show no extraordinary powers as befitting the Supreme Lord. The real devotees of Krsna are never fooled by the imitations. They are guided by the Vedic scriptures, and they only accept genuine *avataras* who are described in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and other Vedic literature.

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August 26, 4:45 A.M.

I started doing new free writing and poems for a few days, and now I've "pooped out."

Baladeva encouraged me to start again. Some of the rules of free writing are: “Keep the hand moving,” “Don’t think.”

August is almost over. The attraction of iron filings to a magnet. I am sleepy. Memory: Sleeping as a young boy scout in an unheated shed on a straw mattress, shivering all night. Krsna and Swamiji have rescued me. Now I am under their shelter, although I could do much better.

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A Passing Thought:

The fragile nature of people in relation to their bodies. Several cases here. For devotees who come here and help us, their time is short-lived. On the other hand, any service relationship they establish is eternal.

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August 20, 11:15 AM

Prabhupada lecturing in Vrndavana, September 1976—“What is the difficulty? Just surrender to Krsna.” Surrender to the *mahajanas*, Prahlada, Bhisma, Sukadeva, Lord Siva . . . Do not manufacture God. *Man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru*. Think of Krsna, chant His names. He will protect you from all reactions to sins.

I remember U.S. President Bill Clinton phoning the prime minister of Pakistan and imploring him at the eleventh hour not to develop the nuclear bomb. “Nuclear proliferation is the greatest danger.” The Paks went ahead anyway, citing that their neighbor enemy, India, was already a nuclear power. The *duskrtinas* have meritorious

intelligence to create nuclear bombs, but their motive is demonic. Who is going to phone the U.S. head of state—and Russia and China, North Korea, et. al.—and ask them to disarm their nuclear force?

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Respite

I am mostly resting in the chair during the day and sleeping less at night. I am slowly recovering, I think, from my bout with pneumonia. If I get better and my new Parkinson's disease pills (with extra potency) kick in, then I may hope to grow stronger.

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american primitive

Mary Oliver found so many
animals, birds and flowers
in her long life immersed
in poetry and nature.

Purusa's Writing to Me

Almost every day Purusa writes a one-page vignette and shows it to me. He does spontaneous writings on the state of his mind, his family life, his relations with Krsna and guru, and so on. I write him short notes in response. Purusa takes joy in this exchange, which is very special for him. The latest piece he sent me was "Father and Son Memories." He told how when his son was twelve years old in 1999, they both attended the Major League Baseball All-Star game at Fenway Park in Boston. They were able to get seats, and they even caught a baseball during hitting practice. Purusa

concluded, “a sweet arrangement by our dear Lord Krsna.”

Lord Balarama's Appearance Day

Today is Balarama's Appearance Day. We are not inviting many people because of COVID. We are planning to hold a feast in honor of Balarama. Bala's cousin, Kim, is preparing *dhal-roti*, a Trinidadian special feast. Baladeva has baked a special cake, and there will be *sabjis*. Our out-loud reading group will read selections from the *Krsna* book, selected excerpts of Lord Balarama's pastimes.

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We celebrated Lord Balarama's Appearance Day with a feast I described yesterday. During and after the feast, our out-loud reading group read from the *Krsna* book, selections about the pastimes of Balarama. The first selection we read was “Killing the Demon Prahlabasura.” Prahlabasura, disguised as a cowherd boy, entered Krsna's play with His cowherd friends. Krsna knew he was actually a gigantic demon, but He accepted him as a playmate. Krsna divided Himself and Balarama into leaders of two parties, and They dueled. The loser of the game had to carry a boy from the other side on his shoulders. Prahlabasura's side lost in the duel to Balarama's side, and Prahlabasura had to carry Balarama on his shoulders. As soon as Prahlabasura began to carry Balarama on his shoulders, he understood that he was playing with fire, so he changed his form from a boy into a gigantic demon. He took Balarama a distance from Krsna and the other boys. Balarama was at first surprised at the change in size and demeanor of the person whose back He was sitting on. Then Balarama instantly understood the situation, and He hit Prahlabasura in the head with His mighty fist, causing the cracking of the demon's head, the oozing of blood and the death of the demon.

The next chapter we read was “The Marriage of Samba.” Samba took his wife Lakshmana by force in her *svayamvara* ceremony. All the members of the Kuru dynasty attacked Samba, and after a fight

they subdued him and arrested him. The great sage Narada immediately carried this news to the Yadu dynasty. With the permission of the head of the Yadu dynasty, Ugrasena, the Yadus prepared to attack the capital of the Kuru dynasty.

Lord Balarama thought, “Instead of fighting with them, let Me go there and see the situation, and let Me try to see if the fight can be settled by mutual understanding.” Balarama was welcomed by the members of the Kuru dynasty. But when He announced to them that they should turn over Samba’s wife Laksmana and release Samba, they refused. When Lord Balarama spoke in a commanding tone full of heroic assertion, His statements were not appreciated by the leaders of the Kuru dynasty. They took Balarama’s words as impudence and began defaming Him and the Yadu dynasty. Lord Balarama became very angry with their insulting behavior. Balarama stood up steadily, and taking His plow in His hand, He began striking the earth with it. In this way the whole city of Hastinapura was separated from the earth. Lord Balarama then began to drag the city toward the flowing water of the River Ganges. Because of this, there was a great tremor throughout Hastinapura, as if there had been an earthquake, and it seemed that the whole city would be dismantled. Seeing that their city was about to fall into the waters of the Ganges, the members of the Kuru dynasty immediately came to their senses and understood what was happening. Without waiting another second, they brought forward their daughter Laksmana, along with Samba. The members of the Kuru dynasty appeared before Lord Balarama with folded hands just to beg pardon from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They made humble prayers and submitted themselves to the mercy of Balarama. The members of the Kuru dynasty handed their daughter to Samba, and the whole matter was settled.

Our group of about ten devotees then took turns reading further episodes about Balarama. I also took a turn. We read from the chapter “Lord Balarama Visits Vrndavana.” All the residents became very joyful to see Him, and they gathered around Him and asked about the welfare of Himself and Krsna, and whether Krsna was thinking of the residents of Vrndavana. Balarama then privately met

with the *gopis*. They asked Him whether Krsna was enjoying His life surrounded by the women of Dvaraka-puri. They lamented that Krsna was not returning to them in Vrndavana. They considered Him cruel, but as they spoke their feelings for Krsna became more and more intensified. By the force of the *gopis*' ecstatic feelings, it appeared to them that Krsna was personally present and dancing before them. Because of their sweet remembrance of Krsna, they could not check their tears, and they began to cry without consideration. Lord Balarama began to narrate the stories of Krsna so tactfully that the *gopis* became satisfied. In order to keep the *gopis* of Vrndavana satisfied, Lord Balarama stayed there continually for two months. He enjoyed the *rasa* dance with them.

We read many more pastimes of Lord Balarama, His bellicose dealings with demons like Dvividha gorilla and other great monsters, and His loving dealings with the pure devotees of Vrndavana.

Out-Loud Reading

In our out-loud reading of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, we are hearing the second chapter. Arjuna has expressed his unwillingness to fight and kill his relatives. Krsna disapproves His friend's abandoning the *ksatriya* duty, and says he is talking like a non-Aryan. Krsna says that Arjuna's reasons not to fight are due to material motives—fear of death and attachment to relatives. Arjuna argues he can't enjoy without his relatives, so what is the use of a kingdom? Arjuna says, "In this family fight our deeds will be tainted with blood." Finally he says, "Govinda, I shall not fight," and Duryodhana becomes joyful to hear those words. But Duryodhana's happiness is soon checked. He realizes that Arjuna has surrendered to Krsna as His disciple, and that he will soon submit to Krsna's desires and fight until the end."

Vedic Cosmology

I am corresponding with Sthita-dhi-muni, who is editing a book with the working title *A Flat*

Book on the Round Globe: Classic Concepts of the Earth, Considered in a Modern Context. Sthita-dhi says there is relevancy within the tradition in both presentations of the earth, as spherical and as flat. Srila Prabhupada repeatedly mentioned in his conversations that the earth was like a ball. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura described the earth as “spherical.” But it is not certain whether the devotees in Mayapur are presenting the earth planet as a ball in their construction of the cosmology in the Temple of Understanding. I am just an outsider to their studies, but I am not satisfied if they don’t include a version of the earth as spherical, which all contemporary people are convinced that it is. Sthita-dhi-muni says we should take the version of Sukadeva Gosvami, who said he could not present a description of the cosmos in full because it was too vast and glorious and beyond him to describe in detail. He said we should be satisfied with his presentation as he taught it to Maharaja Pariksit. Personally, I am not satisfied if in the Vedic Planetarium they show the earth as something like a plane and there is no appearance of a spherical earth. Flat-earth advocates seem fanatical. I realize the TOVP people are studying the matter deeply and desiring to remain truthful to the Fifth Canto *Srimad-Bhagavatam* version of the cosmos. So I will have to go along with that.

Radha Raman Dasa

I received an email from Radha Raman dasa. He lives in Connecticut and has association with the temple there. He is a very nice devotee, lives a brahminical life with *sadhana* and cleanliness. He’s a single man. He’s been living in a condo, but the owner wanted to sell it and Radha Raman didn’t want to buy it, so he moved to another condo in the same unit and neighborhood. We have had a long, respectful relationship. He earns some money by editing for a Catholic newspaper. His new condo is to his satisfaction. He rents and doesn’t have to be entangled with property ownership. He likes to spend his time reading Prabhupada’s books and my books also. He has had a strong connection with the temple in Connecticut for many years. He’s seventy years old and sets a good example as a single *vanaprastha*.

Another *Vanaprastha*

I exchange regular letters with Janmastami, my disciple from many years ago. He lives in Mayapur and loves to teach courses from Prabhupada's books. His most recent course was *The Nectar of Instruction*, which he said was the most satisfying teaching he had ever done. He said he taught from Prabhupada's purports and Rupa Gosvami's verses. He studies deeply and takes responsibility to make a good presentation of the book. He emphasized *japa* in his class and used Mahatma Prabhu's book *Japa Affirmations* as supplementary reading. He also used my book *Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name*. He performed a day-long *puja* to Mayapur's Nrsimhadeva Deity and prayed for my help. He told me Pankajanghri Prabhu wrote a book fifteen years ago telling the miraculous results of performing *puja* to our Nrsimhadeva by devotees who are facing various challenges.

Appointment with Dr. Kozer

Dr. Kozer is treating us for Parkinson's disease. It has been two months since we've been taking his medicine, so this was a reassessment. But he couldn't allow us a face-to-face interview. The reason is he has had a bout with COVID. So we had a "tele-med" phone call. He could see both Bala and I. The appointment was for Dr. Kozer to phone us, but he was fifteen minutes late. Then he gave us five minutes' time. We told him how initially after starting his meds we had improved and gotten stronger. But then we reached a plateau after a month, followed by a complete setback with pneumonia. Dr. Kozer's response was brief and direct. Since I had no side-effects from his original prescription of medicine, he doubled the dose, and I have already taken one of the new doses. Dr. Kozer, when we first met him, expressed an interest, as a hobby, in mathematics and cosmology. We were planning to give him some of Sadaputa's books along with some cookies. But that plan was foiled because we were not able to see him in person.

Barium Test Fiasco

Yesterday we had scheduled a barium test at the hospital. (You drink barium and then take an X-ray. It shows the soft tissue around the esophagus.) But the receptionist told us we had come in on the wrong day and told us to come back tomorrow. But then later in the day she phoned us and told us the new appointment was canceled because they didn't have the barium medicine available until a week from now. A great hassle, having to go twice to the hospital in my condition.

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

pp.73-74

“Questions by the Sages” (cont'd)

“How old unlucky and disturbed are the people of Kali-yuga. They live such short lives. Eventually, a man who lives to the age of thirty-five will be considered old. It's getting worse, not better, as the optimists think. People are lazy, misguided, and always quarreling, ‘Life's a bitch.’

“Concentration camps, gas chambers, the Nuremberg trials, atomic bombs, and radioactive fallout ended the age of American isolation and innocence. . . .

Suddenly the old reality was filled with devils and death.’

It's just getting warmed up, this hell called Kali. ‘This is *my* age!’ cries out Kali, ‘and this is my consort, Sin!’

“People lie lazily in the fire, although they are burning. They live for the illusions: ‘We have our shopping malls.’ ‘The politicians and the people's good sense will stop the governments from dropping nuclear bombs.’ ‘We have to pay off our national debts and let gays and women have their rights.’ Or, ‘We have to bring prayer back into the

schools.’ ‘We can set things right.’ ‘America will lead in morality and economy and the world will follow.’

“Bosh.

“Back to Naimisaranya. We should always return to Naimisaranya with the help of Prabhupada’s purports.’

“There’s a reference in Prabhupada’s purport to people’s vitality being sapped by too much dependence on others, by overeating, by laziness, bad habits, and so on. In order to be fit for the struggle for existence, we have to be healthy and sound in body and mind. We can remain healthy by a simple and regulated life, as given to us by the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and the spiritual master. Kali-yuga presents difficulties even for those who seek an alternative path. We are surrounded by an atmosphere of pollution on so many levels, and it’s hard to be pure. How can we be pure when our neighbors are emanating impure sound vibrations all around us? At least we should not be dependent on the materialists’ infrastructure. Self-sufficiency is essential to vitality.

“Srila Prabhupada thought that along with book distribution we should create a society where people can live apart from the normal dependence on material society. In the society of devotees, vitality can be maintained by simple living and high thinking. The society of devotees is meant to protect us from Kali-yuga’s vices. Therefore, we should maintain a pure standard of living and clean out any artificiality in our lives.

“In Kali-yuga, people are less intelligent and always harassed. Famine comes from mismanagement of natural resources. Taxes are imposed by heartless rules. Drought, disease—people are forced to leave the ‘shelter’ of civilization and live as primitives in the hills.

“There are still *sadhus* in India and crowds of people who go to hear them. They

speak *rama-katha* and *krsna-katha* even while India introduces Ferris wheels and night fairs. The ancient life of going to bathe in the Ganges or the Yamuna side-by-side with material culture.

“The anomalies of the age are more fully described in the Twelfth Canto. This verse gives a quick summary. All bad news. Therefore, people in Kali-yuga need special dispensation.

“Some people think we’re on the verge of a worldwide spiritual breakthrough. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says we’re not. As a matter of fact, the way to tell that we’re not on the way to a worldwide spiritual breakthrough is to count the self-proclaimed gurus who cheat their followers. That’s another symptom of our misfortune in Kali-yuga. When people show interest in yoga, prayer, and meditation, cheating gurus take advantage of their innocence.

“The *Bhagavatam* sages, however, are not cheaters. They are more like our elder brothers. Their compassion is broad. In Sanskrit, two terms are usually used to denote compassion, *krpa* and *daya*. *Krpa* refers to compassion for people we know—our family and friends—and *daya* refers to compassion for all living entities regardless of who or what they are. Here the sages are expressing *daya*, universal compassion. Their magnanimity is free from envy and malice. No ordinary, compassionate soul can feel such love toward all.”

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pp.103

“Questions by the Sages” (cont’d)

“Voice within head: I am all right. I am following my inner way. Krsna speaks in His book and I believe His words. Therefore, I want to mold my life to surrender. But I

have to do it, not this or that person telling me how and why. I had to surrender to the Swami in 1966, and in 1976, and in every year in between and since. Me, not his servant telling me, ‘Prabhupada is like this. You should surrender as I deem fit.’ I need to find my own way, my own heart.

“‘You’ll be sorry!’ other voices say.

“But no, I accept the calling of my inner self. Just because I try to surrender according to someone else’s direction, even if he can quote Prabhupada, even if he’s technically right, doesn’t mean I’ll succeed.

“I refuse to criticize or reject my love for you as sentimental. I pray to be stronger, but this is what I am now, this delicate self who wants his own way. Is it lesser?

“Re-enter—in his last ten minutes he dove underwater and felt the water’s pressure pressing on his lungs. One day he has to die. Until then, he has to write and preach (at the Lions Club?), quoting Sanskrit and telling people how the Swami rescued him and he studied *Bhagavad-gita* and taught how the *Gita* has been misinterpreted.”

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pp.110-11

“Questions by the Sages” (cont’d)

“By stating that the chanting of the holy name will free us from *samsara*, the sages at Naimisaranya indicate that chanting at the time of death will be effective. Certainly at death, if at any time, we will experience fear. Everyone is afraid of death. Prabhupada heartily recommends chanting Hare Krsna in our last hours. Death brings the most painful condition to the body and material mind, but calling out Krsna’s names is a relatively easy practice. Chanting brings remembrance of God by sound

vibration, which forces us to *hear Kṛṣṇa*. As Lord Kṛṣṇa states, ‘And whoever, at the end of his life, quit his body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.’ (*Bhagavad-gītā* 8.5)

“Prabhupada reminds us, however, not to try to chant and remember Kṛṣṇa only as a last-hour resort. ‘Remembrance of Kṛṣṇa is not possible for the impure soul who has not practiced Kṛṣṇa consciousness in devotional service. Therefore one should practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the very beginning of life. If one wants to achieve success at the end of his life, the process of remembering Kṛṣṇa is essential. Therefore one should constantly, incessantly chant the *maha-mantra* . . .’

“You know this, little soul.

You know that chanting is

the main practice to save you

from danger and

fear of death. And you chant every day,

starting as early as possible.

You chant especially fervently

when you’re afraid.

“As I write, a guard outside the house—he sleeps outdoors—coughs again and again. He sleeps on or near the front porch, like a personal protector. The owner has provided him for us. We approve of his coming because this is a remote house near a river and a dam. Thugs may have seen that two Westerners are living here and I’m sure there have been rumors about how our rooms are crammed with Western amenities.

The *chaudikar*, however, carries only a bamboo stick as a weapon, and he bundles up in his quilt and coughs.”

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p. 114

“Questions by the Sages (cont’d)

“*Kirtana-rasa* and *japa-rasa* are the safest places in the world to be. Whatever provokes us to chant, whether it be fear or joy with duty or impulsiveness, we can certainly find ourselves safe. Prabhupada writes, ‘When chanting the *maha-mantra*, we are completely safe, even in this most dangerous position.’ He doesn’t say that the dangerous position goes away, even for devotees. Rather a devotee should realize from the tribulations that the material world is a dangerous place. We should get out.”

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From ***Morning Songs***

pp. 80-81

“Too Much . . .”

“5:06 A.M.

“Too much rushing isn’t good for
meditation on the names.

“Lord Caitanya teaches Sanatana
the three phases of devotion
to the personal Lord. First
is *sambandha*, establishing

your relationship as His
 eternal servant. Next is
abhideya, rendering service
 to Krsna. And finally *prayojana*,
 reaching the goal, back to Godhead.
 I am at the stage of *abhideya*,
 knowing my place as the servant
 and engaging in activities
 of service.

“The room is warm. The
 air conditioner turns on for
 five seconds and then kicks off.
 The birds are chirping mightily
 in the 4:45 darkness
 piercing the otherwise silence
 of pre-dawn. I have read
 the poets, but I’m begging
 alms from my Muse.

“Today Nitai from Bangladesh
 arrives to visit us in New York.
 He is sweet but overworked
 managing a big factory, and
 he suffers from stress.

He's in America to meet
with big customers and their
rigid demands for high
qualities of goods.

“Poor Nitai has a
burden on his shoulders.
Krsna is in control
of my hand. I ask
Him to let me sing.

“A lively melody wants
to come out to cheer
the readers in the swing
of Spring. Laksman played
his Little League game
yesterday and tonight Saci
is going to Yankee stadium
to watch the game with
the Red Sox. I will go
to bed early resting my
head on the pillow
in peaceful repose.

“There's nothing more to say.

A devotee in Mayapur is
 bathing daily in Ganga-devi
 on my behalf, and I am
 receiving the blessings. At
 her request I am praying
 for her daughter and for
 all the devotees in our family.
 I hope my prayers have some
 effect.”

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From ***Last Days of the Year***

pp.101-2

“This morning it was raining while I was out. Came back with my jacket soaked. Hung it on the chair. It was still wet when I went out for the second time around 3 P.M. The rain had stopped, and I went into nature's backyard. The streams from the high hills were furious—white water and waterfalls rushing past. Puddles and mud . . . but the sky clearing in a few places. Nothing like actual sunshine. As I walked, I felt the beginnings of a headache. I simply chanted Hare Krsna.

“No biting the lip when writing, and no headaches allowed.

“They gave me something to put up my nose and on my head when the pain comes, but I knew it wouldn't work. I saw the doctor (in Mayapur) for only ten minutes. After that, he met with Madhu, who bought a big haul of medicine, powders, and oils. I don't really believe in it, but we take them until they run out and that's it, until we find another hoax.

“Pardon me for my cynicism. I am going to try hypnotherapy next month, so I should talk about being gullible.”

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From ***Shack Notes: Moments While at a Writing Retreat***

pp.211-12

“4:00 P.M.

“The sun comes in at an angle.

“Come out and admit a tiny truth: ‘I like to sit in a private shack in a little forest, where it is peaceful. I can sit here by the hour listening to forest sounds and feel at ease.’ To justify this, I write ‘madly.’ My critical mind prods me to do something worthwhile.

“The artist and his critic: an internal drama in twenty-one acts.

“Dear diary, dear somebody, I thought I found freedom, but find myself confined to a way of expression. There is no freedom in this world.

“I too am under the grips of the tyrannical mind and senses. Occasionally, I may wriggle free from their grip, and repeat with conviction what my gurus speak. They speak with conviction.

“I play the role of someone entitled to give advice to others. I don't even know if I am entangled or free. Nothing is certain.

“I keep wanting to create the right effect, to speak with grace, to enter and exit artistically.

“One can subdue all this, regard it as nonsense. But one needs commiseration.”

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From ***Prabhupada Appreciation***

pp.188-89

“Prabhupada brought the residents of Vrndavana out of the pages of mythology and showed us that they were actually the best lovers of Krsna. He gave us the *Krsna* book so that we could see how Mother Yasoda, Lord Brahma and the *gopis* love Krsna, and how by personally meditating on Him, they intensified their love for Him many times. ‘Mother Yasoda then embraced Krsna, allowing Him to sit down on her lap, and began to look upon the face of the Lord with great love and affection. Because of her intense infection, milk was flowing from her breast.’

“Ultimately, Prabhupada taught us that *bhakti* was the highest form of love. In that sense, he was instructing us as the *Bhagavad-gita* enjoins, to give up all varieties of religion and simply surrender unto Krsna. ‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the son of Mother Yasoda, is accessible to devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service, but He is not as easily accessible to the mental speculators, to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self.’

“Prabhupada’s teaching of love was personified in the performance of devotional service (*bhakti*), divine love. He proved to us by his own devotion that Krsna was indeed the all-attractive, lovable Godhead. This is the basis of the *Krsna* book and the paintings. One’s attention, desires and love should be reposed in Krsna alone, and in this way, one can become a lover of the entire creation, which is, after all, just another manifestation of Krsna’s wonderful potencies.”

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

pp.136-37

“The day will come when you will hear the wind washing in the pines and you will think of a Vraja pastime. The grass in Wicklow will suddenly bring you to the grass on Govardhana Hill and the words of the *gopis*: “This Govardhana Hill is the best of the servants of Hari because it provides fresh grass for His cows.’

“When your heart is free of material desire (*visaya*), then you can see Vrndavana. Srila Prabhupada saw Vrndavana aboard an Indian tanker on the Red Sea. He saw Radha-Damodara in Vraja in Manhattan. At such times he yearned to return to Vrndavana, but even more, he desired to carry out the order of his spiritual master to preach Krsna consciousness to the Western people. He saw Vrndavana (where we saw a beat-up Indian bus belching black exhaust smoke on the road to Agra). He brought us to Vrndavana and then sent us out to preach again, assuring us, “This is best. You have learned to keep Vrndavana in your heart.’

“It’s possible to have that romantic concept of Vrndavana. That means imagining yourself there amidst the splendid and pleasant trees and ponds and Yamuna . . . imagining yourself merging into the eternal role . . . So visiting Vrndavana will smash that and I will gain something better than I imagined.”

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From ***Journal and Poems, Volume 2 (January-June 1986)***

pp.203-4

“Two Portraits”

“Big Son of Hari”

1

“Six-foot-nine, three hundred pounds, sometimes violent.

His senses also

violent against him.

With the burden of a sick wife
& carrying his crying daughter;
surrendered to Hari.

A good man to have
on your side
in a fight.

2

“He’s open about his sin:
‘When just a teenager
I used to ride my bike
from Jersey to Times Square’s porno shops.’
Sometimes in *kirtanas* he leaps,
and his head almost touches
the high chandeliers.
Big son of Hari,
always tries again.

“*Sakti dasa*”

“His clothes are neat, he’s punctual,
in chanting he sits upright,
but everyone knows
he doesn’t like
to do the needful. ‘My guru said
I should paint.’

Unsundered artist,
but he too takes shelter in the *dhama*.”

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

pp.284-85

“What made you know something was over?”

“At the GBC meetings in Mayapur in 1986, I knew that my membership in the GBC was over. My migraine headaches were so bad it was torture for me to attend the meetings. Within a half hour after sitting down for the meetings I would develop a pain in my right eye that became intolerable and forced me to leave. This would happen regularly. For a while they would hook up a radio in my room, where I would be laying in bed, so that I could listen to whatever was being discussed in the meetings. Whenever it was time for a vote, a messenger would come to my room and collect my secret ballot. But even that became unbearable. At the time I had to rest and not tune in to the debates. I prepared a letter of resignation in which I used the word ‘torture’ to describe what I was going through by attending the meetings.

“So migraines were the apparent cause for my resignation, but there was another cause I did not openly state. 1986 was the year the grassroots movement in ISKCON reprimanded the GBC and the initiating gurus for perpetuating the zonal *acarya* system. Jayadvaita Swami compiled a list of serious wrongs that had been committed by the GBC. He said the GBC had to go through a process of recognizing the wrongs, repenting for them, then rectifying them in some practical way, and only then could they resume their duties. Each GBC man was individually interviewed by a committee of the leaders of the grassroots movement. During

these interviews each GBC man was confronted about his mistakes. I thought, with the GBC being found to be so much in the wrong, it might be a fitting gesture for me to step down and resign from the body. This was my secondary motivation, although I did not say as much in my letter, which dealt only with my medical condition. These events put an end to my seventeen-year career as a GBC.”

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

pp.270-71

“Rupa Gosvami under the Ter Kadamba tree writing the pastimes of Radha and Krsna—this is the ultimate in creative art. Rupa Gosvami’s Sanskrit penmanship was beautiful art (like a row of pearls), and his use of grammar and metaphor was artful. The pastimes of Radha and Krsna in Vrndavana (arranged by Vrnda-devi, who makes the trees blossom) is also the topmost creative act, filled with dance and song and decoration in the arts of love. Krsna consciousness is all creative arts, even joking.

“Simple, childlike. A boy playing in the sand with his toy cars. He creates a world and then it vanishes in a moment. He is constantly creating without demanding anything from his work. Neither does he demand that the world notice what he is doing.

“Fascination with craft, like writing or chanting—if we could only have that childlike simplicity and absorption and detachment.”

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From ***Prabhupada Meditations, Volume 1***

pp.122-23

“Aside from my own particular mentality, when I hear devotees making prayers to the Lord for the improvement of their service, it usually seems right. If the young musicians of ‘Krsnafest’ record a song and pray, ‘Krsna, please make this record a hit so that all the kids will love it and Krsna consciousness will spread widely’—why object? And who can disagree with the prayers that have been given to the whole society of devotees to recite for protection against the anti-cult court cases? We pray every morning, ‘Dear Radha-Damodara, if You desire, please keep all of Your temples open for Your devotees.’ Devotees intensely involved in their own services work hard, do everything they can, and at the same time, they pray to Krsna. And even as they pray they allow the Lord to do as He desires.

“Sometimes it seems to me that the only prayer we should make would be a prayer like that of Vasudeva Datta or Jesus Christ, asking the Lord to please save all of the conditioned souls of the world. ‘Let there be no more suffering, but let everyone go back to Godhead.’ Pure devotees who pray like that are also willing to do whatever they have to do to bring it about, including taking the suffering on themselves. But even great devotees know that the Lord’s will is not fully known to us. He has given all living entities a little amount of free will, and based on the misuse of that free will, the material world and the resultant suffering goes on. Why then should one pray to change that which is already perfect, namely the Lord’s arrangement for the material world? My answer is that when devotees make such prayers, they are going beyond the standard philosophical comprehension of the Lord’s works—they dare to call upon the Lord to be even more merciful, and they offer themselves as sacrifices for this cause.”

From ***My Relationship with Lord Krsna***

pp.85-86

“I remember the days when Srila Prabhupada was dictating *Krsna* book and sending me the tapes to type and edit. I was often the first lecturer who knew directly from Prabhupada the extended pastimes of child Krsna in Vrndavana. When Prabhupada visited Boston in 1968, I had the opportunity to speak to an audience at Prabhupada’s request in his presence. After some preliminary philosophy, I began to tell one of the pastimes I had recently heard on tape. I told how Krsna was a naughty child and had stolen yogurt and butter from a neighbor’s stock. Krsna and Balarama then distributed this butter to Their monkey friends.

“When the monkeys were satisfied and wouldn't take more, the boys said, ‘This butter is useless. Even the monkeys won’t take it!’ When the neighbors caught the boys and accused Them, They said, ‘You think We don’t get sufficient butter at home? We didn’t steal anything.’ As I spoke, I saw my audience break into wonderful grins. I sensed that there was more to their smiles than my own presentation. Glancing at Srila Prabhupada by my side and slightly behind me, I saw him smiling with pleasure to hear Krsna's pastime repeated by his little son.

“I pray that I may never give up the practice of speaking *krsna-katha* as ordered by Prabhupada and that I may bring a smile to his face and, by reflection, to the hearts and faces of the audience.”

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

p.78

Honesty: The Good Fight

“... Honesty means that we have to do what we don’t want to do, but what is best for us. When we do the unwanted task and suffer voluntarily, that is called *tapasya*—and that is honesty in spiritual life. To sink back from a prescribed duty claiming, ‘I have to be honest with myself; my heart is not attracted to this duty’—is not honesty, but more like corruption and laziness. We should at least strive to know the difference.”

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From ***One Hundred Prabhupada Poems***

pp.52-53

“#80

“Yes I was on many morning walks with you
and I'm proud of it.

I like to see my *sikha*-tousled head
sticking up and me gliding behind you,
to hear thoughtfully
what you have to say.

I listened best on those morning walks.

At other times I was plagued with mental problems.

But no matter how restless I was—

wanting service in separation from you,

disliking the menial nature of what I had—

I never disliked the walks.

There was pure philosophy streaming from you.

The debate with Mayavadis and scientists,

the joy of walking with you and
how you kept the conversation
so pure, preaching,
and the clothes you wore too—
lightweight garlands of frangipani in Hawaii,
a soft wool shawl,
your saffron wool *cadar* over that,
most handsome and stately.
'Good morning!' you said to passersby.
Little did they know who you were.
We shared at least a little
the secret you carried.
I'm looking at those photos today
and feeling comforted.
Your hand in your beadbag,
your face turned back and smiling to a disciple.
If I try to get too much out of it
the photo will vanish.
I'll try not to be greedy.
You exist in many dimensions,
not just in a piece of glossy Kodak paper.
But it aroused my devotion to see your image.
I don't want to miss you.
Please take me on the walk.
Please talk or be silent as you wish,

please walk with your disciples,
and make us Krsna conscious.”

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

pp.50-51

“March 16

Trinidad

“To those who ‘worship’ life itself,

“Sometimes when I talk with people like yourselves I feel a little intimidated because you claim that Krsna consciousness doesn’t give enough attention to life. In the Krsna conscious philosophy, we teach that the material world is actually an illusion because it is temporary. The material manifestation is real in that it comes from God and is God’s eternal energy, but it is unreal because it does not last. Reality lies in what is eternal. However, we don’t dismiss this temporary manifestation. Human existence is certainly poignant and full of opportunity. This life is a brief time in which a person can develop surrender to Krsna to the fullest extent. This assures his going to the eternal spiritual world in the next life. So the opportunity of this life is very precious.

“I think my main point to you is this: your religion is contained within mine. By this I don’t mean to deride or minimize your religion. Rather, I mean this as a prelude to a friendly exchange. We are part of the same family. But if one simply ‘worships’ life without the transcendental goal, it is hardly a religion.

“I have a particular viewpoint in Krsna consciousness. As someone who tries to serve through writing, I have a proclivity to capture the experience of life as it passes.

This is Krsna's time and place; how can I reject it? And by writing down the day I can see how well I used this precious life. Krsna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*: 'For one who always sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me.' (Bg. 6.30)

“So I guess I'm also writing this letter indirectly to devotees of Krsna—to remind them that attention to temporary phenomena is important if the temporary phenomena includes our very life in this body and our attempt to become Krsna conscious. When we communicate with each other and share what is valuable, it's not just that we quote the *sastra* to each other or talk about the times that existed in Vedic culture five hundred or five thousand years ago. We have to talk about the present and share our love according to time, place, and person.”

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Writing Sessions

From *Dublin Pieces* (June 1996)

#15)

“We left the preaching center a little after 9:00 A.M. in Manu's car. There was Manu and Ramanuja in the front seat, and me and Madhu in the back. Madhu remarked that the city looked different now at nine than it did when we had walked over at seven. Manu said that Dublin was becoming more caught in the European work ethic, and so the streets were busier earlier in the morning. He said that previously he had never seen the streets busy at 7:00 A.M. but now it was so.

“I said, ‘James Joyce said, “Dublin is the center of the paralysis of the universe.”’

“All three devotees laughed. Although I had hit high on the laugh meter, I immediately felt bad about what I had said. I had created a mundane moment and, in its wake, entered hollowness. Fortunately, we were able to fill up that void with Krsna conscious talk.”

“(June 27, 1996, back at the Dublin flat)”

#16)

“You know, I thought of this *Dublin Pieces* as a warm-up to July, where I hope to sustain a similar thing all month. Dublin has been like a bubble of the city, and everything I wrote here was within it. Just to be here is to preach. Last night I sat with our host and his wife and advised him to invite friends for *prasadam* and to sometimes go chant *harinama* in the park, and don’t be frustrated but advance and surrender more.

“He asked me how to become more sincere. Maybe he was alluding to something else. I carried on with speech for forty-five minutes. They are not my disciples.

“Now, that dream just now—Srila Prabhupada came to my house with his servant and we planned an outing, a preaching engagement, for Prabhupada. But when I went to see him, he had not been served breakfast by his servant (his servant was not one I knew in life). His servant had eaten his own breakfast—I saw him eating a fruit. He had not given any to Prabhupada. The servant and Prabhupada had an intimate relationship we other devotees could not understand. They got angry with each other as ways of expressing love and sacrifice. I was an outsider to it.

“Maybe it means I can expect to go deeper in my relationship with Srila Prabhupada, beyond this official one. When Prabhupada found out his servant had a

headache and that's why he had eaten the fruit that could have been served to his master, Prabhupada gave his servant a gentle head massage.

“We are leaving here and driving for the ferry to England. That will start the next book. May Prabhupada accept me and this writing which I offer to him. I cannot assume to jump over into the intimate relationship, as I saw he had in the dream with his servant. But maybe I already do it, and others can't understand that my drawings and writings (which seem to them to be self-centered) are offerings to him. He can be angry with me and that is his right—and sometimes I may be angry with him (like Lord Caitanya and Jagadananda?).

“Write out of love and offer it for the spreading of the Krsna consciousness movement. I advised my host to go outdoors for *harinama* and invite people to his home. Good advice. And to yourself, I advise you to write.

“Grateful I can publish, give the best. First draft? Any draft. I rewrite by writing the next book.

“Goodbye to the Dublin situation. In England I'll lecture on cow-killing and on the religions of the *yavanas*. Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna. Read on the ferry. Write there.

You proposed to tell truth and lies,
be serious and playful.

“Srila Prabhupada, why were you angry? I know! Because we mismanaged and neglected you. I heard Prabhupada telling his servant, ‘We could have gone straight from Bombay to (someplace) but Satsvarupa invited us, so we have come here.’ But aside from his servant's loving quarrel with the master, what about me? I was stupid and fumbling. ‘Where is the road map? Where is the money? Where is his breakfast?’ I

wasn't fit to invite him because I was not able to arrange nicely for his stay. I had other things on my mind and was spaced-out and asleep. All this was exposed when he came into our house, ill-prepared as I was.

“That house, 125 Katan Avenue. I could tell more about it. What is the use? A little at a time. Yes.

“I have no working title or concept for July. That's all right, it will come. With *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*, I began Volume One in Vrndavana and Volume Two began in Bombay. Now this July book begins with a warm-up in Dublin, city of writers. Sign off with love, with a dream of a relationship too intimate for me to understand. Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare.

“So, now I ought to start chanting,
two black birds assumed a pose.
My spiritual master is not angry with me
except in love.
I write like a crazy peacock
showing-off poet.
My moving hand writing this,
headache clears.
Skies in
Ireland clear only to cloud again.
Go to England. Get news of
Mad Cow disease, so you'll
know what to say. Chant now

and think or feel for that servant
 who didn't give Prabhupada his breakfast
 and explain to me why he neglected
 the master but I couldn't
 comprehend.

I'll serve in my own relationship
 with awe and respect, preach to
 help others understand in any way.
 Write this way, which is intimate
 and not easily understood by others.

“Similarly, I shouldn't presume to judge others and how they serve him.
 Goodbye for now. Hare Krsna.

“Wrote today true and false,
 present and past,
 diary and memory.

“Hare Krsna, the truth is in the pudding you offer to the Lord. Syamananda
 asked about the relationship with the spiritual master and I'll be talking of that in
 Belgium. *Dublin Pieces*, I thank you.

“Rather, I thank you,
 Divine Master,
 Supreme Lord whose four nutshell

verses of *Gita* that I spoke on
 and that was the contribution I made best.
 Thank you for allowing me,
 for training me
 so, I could speak it and
 remind us Krsna is
 source of all and those
 who are wise worship
 Him with all their hearts
 and He gives them *buddhi*
 to come to Him.

“When Praghosa said he didn’t want to assume that God was speaking to him in
 the heart, I said, ‘But it is true, imperceptibly, in our life.’ Krsna is directing us. So, let
 us go chant His names.”

“(June 28, 1996, early morning before leaving the Dublin flat)”