

Free Write Journal #159

September 3, 2021

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Free Writes

Tributes Book

I especially liked the homage by Jayadvaita Maharaja. It was titled, “Thoughts.” The title reminded me of the philosopher/theologian Pascal’s *Pensees* and my own “Lists,” where I put numbered subjects of ten or twenty random thoughts. I like that Jayadvaita Swami’s homage. I don’t like the long, long ones. He got right to the point:

“Thoughts:”

“Srila Prabhupada has brought the pure holy name.”

“We can understand Srila Prabhupada by the grace of
Srila Prabhupada.”

“He kept it pure.

He kept it simple.

When we remember him, he is with us.

J.S. may feel modest about this year’s homage, but I liked it the best.

Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu's Homage

Ravindra Svarupa wrote something that I've heard him speak several times in his lectures. He wrote that the four prohibitive orders are not just moral teachings, but they are items of knowledge, they are cognitive. I couldn't quite understand what he meant, but I was intrigued. I liked his homage, as I like everything he does.

He also wrote about an exchange between Prabhupada and a reporter. She asked, "Why have you come to the West?" Ravindra says Prabhupada's answer is one of his most cherished memories of Prabhupada. He said, "I have come to give you a brain." The reporter's pencil stopped moving, her countenance lifted up displaying eyes and mouth wide open in amazement. The look she gave was priceless. Prabhupada's explication was the best part. He explained that the social body is articulated like the individual human body. But our so-called "advanced" society has no head, no brain. Prabhupada's audacious mission was to construct—or reconstruct—the genuine human society, and that construction would begin with the head. Prabhupada went on to emphasize his books. I liked that very much.

Janmastami Observance and Feast

Our Janmastami observance was quiet but sweet. We began by having Bhakti Rasa and Kirtida sing *kirtana*, "Krsna, Krsna, Krsna, Krsna, Krsna, Krsna, Krsna, He!" Bhakti Rasa led, and his wife followed. They sang for fifteen or twenty minutes. Then a devotee arranged for a reading of Krsna's pastimes from the *Krsna* book in honor of Janmastami. Devotees in our out-loud reading group took turns reading "The Prayers of the Demigods for Krsna in the Womb," "Putana Killed," "The Salvation of Trnavarta," and others.

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A Janmastami feast was prepared by Krsna dasi and Baladeva Vidyabhusana. Krsna dasi made

samosas and a *sabji*. Baladeva prepared chutney for the *samosas*, *puris*, sweet rice and *sandesa*, spinach *panir*. There was also a sweet drink, raspberry and lemonade.

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For Janmastami, both Gaura-Nitai and Radha-Govinda had completely new outfits. Both were unusually beautiful. Our large *neem* Gaura-Nitai *arca-vigraha* outfits were sewn by Suddha-bhakta devi dasi. She has recently been coming to Viraha Bhavan to help maintain the Deities and dress Them along with Krsna dasi. Gaura-Nitai's dress is sewn peach silk with a shiny dark blue border. They have sequined *cakras* on Their turbans. Their stunning outfits emphasize Their large size and Their graceful poses.

Krsna dasi brought forth a brand new outfit for Radha-Govinda made by Tapan, who is (we think) the best *jari-walla* in Vrndavana. We have a close relationship with him. And he strives to make many lovely and varied outfits for Their Lordships. For Janmastami They were wearing dresses patterned in light blue and maroon. Govinda wore a thick turban with a peacock feather on top. He bore a long golden flute inlaid with jewels. Downstairs there were five new vases of flowers, which set off the Deities nicely. We gave Prabhupada a change in *pavitras* (a silk garland he wears around his neck). For the holidays, our altars are all decorated with flowers from our gardens.

Audio Recordings of *Prabhupada-lilamrta*

I received an email addressed to "Hare Krsna, dear devotees." It was signed by "Your servants at the Srila Prabhupada Nectar team." These devotees' names were listed, and they were from Mayapur, South Africa, Australia and Chennai.

Their letter states: "The inspiration to start this project [of making audio recordings] in January 2021 is echoed by Annutama Prabhu's Vyasa-puja offering to Srila Prabhupada in 2021:

“By hearing about you from proper sources, we better comprehend the challenges you faced, the decisions you made, the considerations you weighed in making your choices. Not that we just recite, as if memorized, ‘Prabhupada had two heart attacks on the ship, and he didn’t have much money in New York City, and he fought for the Juhu temple, and he published lots of books, and he opened lots of temples, and it all came out okay, and that was his wonderful *lila*. Jaya Prabhupada!’ That is simply not enough. We need to know more. We need to know that you didn’t ‘have’ two heart attacks, you *suffered* two heart attacks; you didn’t just face some abstract obstacles, *you sometimes went hungry* because of lack of money as you pushed on your mission. In later years, *out of anxiety you couldn’t sleep* many nights as you worried about the problems your movement faced. *You cried sometimes* when reunited with disciples who had left you. *You laughed and told jokes* that left disciples bursting with laughter. *You were excited by new challenges*. Your eyes twinkled when teasing your disciples and their children. And *you became angry at*, but never envious of those who were too proud or who offended the Lord. In short, we need to understand that you are not a silent *murti* sitting on your *vyasasana*.”

I am pleased to hear that this audio recording of the *Lilamrta* is going on. It has been long overdue. I hope many disciples and grand-disciples take part in this project. I am enthusiastic, despite my health issues, to take part in reading excerpts from the biography, and I think it is poetic justice that I do so as the author of the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. I will write to the Prabhupada Nectar team and express my desire to join their project and make a contribution.

Summer End

It’s the end of August, and signs of the season’s change. For most of August, I was afflicted with

pneumonia, and my assistants didn't take time to tend to the gardens. The roses look shabby and the weeds are overgrown. Some of the weeds are so big they are choking out flowers. We will try to do some cleanup so that the yard looks better for Janmastami and Vyasa-puja. Our yard is not an ordinary one; it's an ashram of Krsna, and we have to keep it as clean and neat as possible. We will have a small Janmastami and Vyasa-puja observation because of COVID. Our ashram is disoriented, but at least we'll try to read some from the *Krsna* book, centering around the birth celebration of baby Krsna. Reading steadily in the *Tributes* book in preparation for Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja day. Again, it will be quietly observed with just a few guests in attendance. It is not a "business-as-usual" day. We read and express our love and obligation to our spiritual master.

All-Star Adventure

In 1999, when Purusa's son was twelve years old, the MLB All-Star game was held in Fenway Park in Boston. Purusa wrote about it to me on two pages titled "Father and Son Memories." Luckily, Purusa had enough for two tickets to the All-Star game. The game itself was phenomenal, with Pedro Martinez striking out the first five hitters, all great stars and future Hall-of-Famers. P. wrote me, "My son and I had unique bragging rights, seeing historic events at wonderful Fenway Park: a sweet arrangement from our dear Lord Krsna." He even caught a baseball hit to him during batting practice.

SDG Letter Excerpt

" . . . In reading your thesis, I found myself being educated by your descriptions of the psychotherapists and their clients, and especially by your own inner journey, guided by these different teachers and fascinated by your own work learning how to become whole by the techniques taught by these teachers and healers. I am writing this letter to you on the occasion of Lord Balarama's Appearance Day. I take part with a

group of about fifteen devotees in twice-daily out-loud readings (using Zoom). Today we are reading excerpts from the *Krsna* book about the pastimes of Lord Balarama. We do not accept these as myths or mental speculation, but as absolute truth coming down in disciplic succession in the Vedic literature. I have surrendered to my spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, and the line of teachers he represents. They all accept the method of hearing in *parampara* (the disciplic succession of gurus and disciples) who come down from time immemorial, teaching the Vedic truths unchanged.“

Book Production Report

Lal Krishna from Oxford sent me samples of the two books he’s going to have completed in time for presentation on my Vyasa-puja day (Saturday, December 4). One book he’ll have ready is *The Best I Could Do*. It’s a full-size free-writing book which has been typed and edited by Krishna-bhajana and Satyasara d.d. Now the layout and artwork (covers) will be done by Lal Krishna. The second book we’ll have ready is *Collected Haiku*. It’s a reprint of my two haiku books, which have been out of print for a long, long time, and which old readers don’t want to let their copies go. I’m proposing the title be *Collected Haiku*, and on the front cover the title of the first book, *Under the Banyan Tree* as a subtitle, and an illustration of a big banyan tree with roots exposed. On the back cover I suggested he print the words *The Dust of Vrndavana* and use an illustration of the lotus feet of Radha and Krsna. We hope to reprint a few other books to have them ready for distribution on December 4th.

Art Book

Another book we’ll have ready for December 4th distribution is *The Many Colors of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami*. This book sold very well at the July 3rd meeting, but we still have many copies left. I consider it a very important book. It has many of my paintings reproduced and an excellent essay by

Satyaraja explaining my art as part of the “outsider art” school, which is well-recognized and well-appreciated in art circles.

More Tributes

Rukmini devi dasi’s tribute is very nice. She describes how she met Prabhupada in Montreal just when his six dear disciples from San Francisco arrived, “to get your blessings, as you trained them up to go to London and please you even more.” The San Francisco devotees introduced Rukmini and said, “This is Wendy. She is only sixteen years old, and she wants to become your disciple.”

She writes,

“You looked at me so tenderly, so compassionately and said, ‘But where are your parents?’ as though you were feeling their pain, feeling the pain of our whole culture in upheaval.

“With the foolish arrogance of a teenager, I said, ‘My parents and I get along better when we’re not together.’

“You immediately looked away, and I felt the sting of my pride that caused you disdain. Even today, I wince remembering how my conceit caused you to look away at that moment.”

Then he turned away from Wendy and exchanged loving words with his San Francisco devotees.

Rukmini then writes, “I have no realization of pure devotion. I only know that you saved me from a fate worse than I can imagine. Fifty years later once again, I ask you to please accept me. This time I pray for genuine humility, simplicity and maturity as I beg you to kindly engage me in your eternal loving service.”

Devotee Association

Yesterday I was visited by my disciple who is an attorney, Kirtan Rasa dasa. He's been practicing law for many years and said he plans to retire after a few more years. He's very involved with his grown-up children and his fifteen-year-old son. He keeps in touch with world events and is a passionate upholder of justice. Today I was supposed to meet, or at least talk on the phone, with Rev. John Endler, but there was a mugging at his church, and so he had to cancel all communication while he dealt with his emergency. John and I have a relationship that's very important to both of us. He collaborates with me in publishing my books. Tonight I'll make my weekly phone call with Haridasa dasa, who is a counselor in a college. He is trying to see that work as devotional service to Krsna. Our weekly phone calls are very enlivening to us both. I must have association with devotees like this, and others also. "No man is an island, entire to himself." The *sastras* advise us to serve a devotee like the spiritual master, who is a representative of Krsna, with equals we should make close friends, and reveal our minds. With those who are innocent, we should help them to purify and raise themselves to the Vaisnava standard (even though I do not claim to reach that standard for myself). But I know I need association with living devotees, like those who wrote their homages to Srila Prabhupada in the *Tributes* book.

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

pp.144-46

"Someone may smile and say, 'A few years ago, you knew nothing of Krsna and the Vedas, and now you assert them as irrevocable facts. How did you become such an advanced Vedantist?' They think we are raw converts repeating the party line.

"It's true that we didn't know anything and that now we have adopted and espoused a Vedic life. Someone may have known us before when we were feckless and spouted doubts. They may even spot discrepancies in our present behavior. But we

acknowledge them. Prabhupada praised what might appear as the naïve conversion of his disciples. He didn't call it naïve, but he appreciated that within a few short years, people who had never even heard about Krsna had now made Him the goal of their lives.

“The other half of Prabhupada’s comment on that subject: ‘They were not envious.’ Therefore, we could hear from him. That nonenviousness was (and is) our qualification.

“More admissions and some assertions:

(1) I run on.

(2) I want to convince myself. I feel good when I get worked up by the rhetoric of *krsna-katha*.

(3) When I sit on the *vyasasana*, I can't go for more than an hour or an hour and a half. I can answer most questions. Even if the questions are too technical, I've learned to scale them down to basic and important points. I can see people's motives in their questions. I assert and defend the *Bhagavatam* conclusion. It's a performance, but a sincere one.

(4) I admit I was a jerk and that I am still foolish, but I've also improved. I used to be even more self-centered than I am now, believe it or not.

(5) I curb my tongue, anger, genitals, and belly, and even my mind and words. I dare to initiate disciples on behalf of my spiritual master.

(6) I realize that it's not proper or standard to talk about one's self so much while speaking Krsna consciousness to an audience. Therefore, this writing is more like talking to myself.

(7) Maybe I shouldn't be writing a spiritual diary here, tracking my progress and noting my faults. Such a diary is valuable, but why put it

side-by-side with *Bhagavatam* purports? I've told you (and me) why I do it, but I know it's odd. What else can I do? 'Repairs are underway to make a better airport for you. Please excuse the temporary inconvenience.'

(8) He's sorry.

(9) He's voluble (flowing speech).

(10) Brr. Grunt. Hunkers and hunch.

(11) Learned this run-on not at school. Where? Some New Age writing teachers?

(12) Turn the guy off. Turn down the volume of self. Let's hear the wind in the trees and bushes and under that, waterfalls over a dam.

(13) He writes because a headache twinge is not far away, so he wants to get a quota done before that. The sun is setting quickly. Forgive us. We mean to glorify Krsna and His incarnations.

(14) We are each part and parcel of Krsna. We are each tiny *isvaras*. We have a little power of speech. Better use it in His service. God is nigh."



A confused person somehow starts listening to Krsna katha

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pp. 138-40

“Here I am, not only writing a summary of a *Bhagavatam* verse, but taking time to discover myself. The other day while sitting in the backyard writing this book, I discovered that I like the mixture of self-reflection and *Bhagavatam* topics. I also felt confident that my self-searching was part of *Bhagavatam* appreciation and could be valuable to others. One cannot sustain such confidence, but at that time when I saw it, it felt as though I had just mined a gem. Yesterday, when asking myself why I felt bored to repeat the philosophy, I decided it might be a symptom of my feeling separation from my spiritual master. This was another good victory for me and helped me to see positive value even in the seeming negative attitude toward writing straight *parampara*.

“I must go on mining. I'm taking my time and the time of friendly readers to do this. Of course, I already told the readers that they may jump off this train if they are not interested in the asides. I'll say it again, for my sake and yours: this train is stopping at local junctions, where most scriptural commentators never stop. At other times, we're speeding through places where people usually stop. Does that make this trip erratic? Singular? Each one of us is his own engineer and can take folks along his own journey—if they're willing to go. Yes, I do it all as service to guru.

“Some admissions:

- (1) After I do a short summary, I don't feel inclined to say more.
- (2) If I had to lecture on this verse, I might get interested and find references.
- (3) I admit I catnapped in the chair during writing time. My head slumped forward, I dreamt something, but can't remember what.

(4) I like to range out, write what's on my mind, but even that . . .

(5) I admit I doubt sometimes whether my reflections are worth reading.

Maybe they are like the soup the British served the Irish during the famine, a watery, unnourishing liquid. Of course, if I raise such doubts, readers may agree.

(6) I talk about myself when I write as I please.

(7) So far I find reading the *Sat Sandarbha* dry.

(8) Don't know what to 'do' with this list of admissions except select from it and present it. This is all I can do right now.

(9) I don't like the tenor of so much psychological jargon and frame of reference in Sinetar's *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics*. I do like other things, though, such as the basic pattern or process she finds in people who withdraw from the worldly norm and who have the guts to be socially transcendent, heed their inner calling, become fulfilled and enlightened to some degree, then take the responsibility to care for others. She writes, "The person who fears his own thoughts, who needs others too much, who is overly self-critical or severely attached to his own cultural belief systems and values may not be able to do this work."

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p. 149

"Prabhupada (while on the Bowery), 'I'm glad to say that this Mr. Paul sometimes says to me, "Swamiji, I want to attain spiritual life immediately!" Yes, I say to him, be patient, be patient. Surely with such determination, Krsna will help you.'

“Patient but active in spiritual life. Tell us what you know about Krsna. Pray. Beg to become a Vaisnava. Beg the senses to stop driving you. Describe the world as hellish without Krsna. Track your progress. Admit your wrongs. Express yourself, but be careful that you don’t indulge in feeling yourself the creator. You're not the creator who is to be exulted, or the main actor who is to be described, by your ‘*uttamasloka*.’ Turn to Krsna, that Other Person in your life. He is maintaining all beings. You are one of them. Your acts are insignificant compared to His. Your worth is only in your turning to Him in *sambandha*, *abhideya* and hopes for *prayojana*. Don't be envious of Krsna enjoying with the *gopis* and speaking so expertly.

“Hear patiently. Stay in the fire with all your rods. And write more.”

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pp.160-62

“Some admissions and complaints:

(1) I'm grouchy.

(2) Sometimes Madhu and I sound like two tired old men as we complain about how others let us down and don't bring things on time or the way we like them. At times like that I don’t like to be with such a tired old monk, and I don't like to be one.

(3) I don't like it when someone argues with me when I say, "I think I'm too thin and would like to put on weight."

(4) Don't be too self-critical, the psychologists say. Okay. Shall I say that my chanting of *japa* and *gayatri* is the best I can do?

(5) This is an unusual, diffuse, "poor" book. Nevertheless, I assert it.

(6) Be humble, Srila Prabhupada says. I am proud and weak. I stumble. I talk anyway.”

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Juice is coming just now
 a glass of it watered
 from a well—in India!
 Juice is coming in a stainless steel cup,
 a small golden-plated one to place
 on Srila Prabhupada's altar
 and a bigger one for me.
 Will it be grape?
 It will be disappointment if I
 live to drink, to eat, to be
 merry, and then die.

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“A blackbird sings one sweet note as the sun goes down. Servant Lakshman's duties with Madhu mostly done. he walks to the bridge above the dam and looks down at the water. What is real? I could muse.

“Real tired. Sweater frayed. Sound of water through dam. Late sounds. Labor is easy but constant.

“A long work projected for Suta and the sages. How could they last a thousand years just on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam's* 18,000 verses?

“Can I last? I once calculated for Prabhupada on a morning walk in Allston, "Swamiji, you've completed the Third Canto. At this rate, if every X number of months you do another canto, how many years would it take?" Prabhupada stopped to calculate for a few moments--it caught his interest--but then he let it go. Wearing a coat and a swami hat, walking those dreadful, dirty streets near Boston University, he said something like, "I'm trying my best. *It is up to Krsna.*"”

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

“From the back cover:”

“ISKCON in the 1970s was selected from the handwritten journals kept by H.H. Satsvarupa dasa Goswami during the 1970s. The 1970s were a time of sudden growth and expansion in the International Society for Krsna Consciousness, all under the inspired guidance of ISKCON’s Founder-Acarya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada was making history. Although a diary is not a complete historical account of a particular time period—rather a diary serves as a subjective record—it still has value to the reader. ISKCON in the 1970s is an eyewitness’s account of what it was like to be a member of the Krsna consciousness movement up to and beyond Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance. It contains a record of direct association with Srila Prabhupada, notes of a college preacher and GBC servant, and a disciple’s viewpoint of the growth of an international preaching movement.”

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pp.240-41

“Srila Prabhupada was invited by a big *pandita* to speak at an evening program, but when the time drew near, we saw the invitations and it appeared that he was just using Srila Prabhupada’s name. The actual cause of the event was not Srila Prabhupada’s appearing there, but it was a meeting to inaugurate some book that was published. The book was announced in big letters, and then it said, ‘ . . . and present will be His Divine Grace, who will introduce the book.’ We disciples didn't like this so much; we saw this invitation for what it was. Anyway, we all went there and it was a big meeting with a lot of people in the audience and strung lights on the beach. There was a big dais built, and many different *panditas* were up there.

“As soon as Srila Prabhupada started to speak, some people began to protest that he was speaking in English, but he said he had to speak in English because he had so many disciples. Prabhupada talked about Lord Jagannatha, and then we could realize that he is in Jagannatha Puri; he is the most qualified, expert devotee of Lord Jagannatha.

“We may not always think like that about Srila Prabhupada, but because he has introduced Ratha-yatra, or Lord Jagannatha all over the world, we could understand that he is the most knowledgeable, intimate devotee of Lord Jagannatha—more than any of them. He was speaking about the different Ratha-yatras, as Prabhupada loves to do. He told them about the Ratha-yatra in England, where the cart was announced in the papers as a rival to Nelson's Column because it was as tall as Nelson's Column in Piccadilly. Then he told about Ratha-yatra in San Francisco. He said that last year, the mayor of San Francisco declared Ratha-yatra a public holiday, ‘Ratha-yatra Day.’ In

this way, he was telling about all the places we have Ratha-yatra—Chicago, Philadelphia, Japan.”

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

pp. 45-46

“The man next door: He is angry all day long. He is on holiday, but keeps yelling at his two big dogs, ‘Get out of here!’ They try to come up on his deck. Why keep them if you don’t want them? This is the man with the blue wooden duck on top of his house. Its wings revolve in the wind. One day, sudden death or some other disillusion will hit his family. The husband and wife will look at the blue painted duck and it will occur to them, ‘We have created this home with millions of details. We worked hard, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to create it, and now it has ended—it is a dream world, topped with a blue duck whose wings revolve in the wind.’

“Will death and similar disillusion not strike this house too? Yes, in every house there will be lamentation. The season of happiness will give way to the season of unhappiness. But a devotee of the Lord will say, ‘Let us chant and hear of Lord Hari. This alone cannot be destroyed by time. Let us remember Him now and at the time of death.’ The house of a devotee cannot be defeated, despite inevitable loss, dwindling, and death.”

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

pp. 192-93

“Sadhana

“I lie in bed having stupid dreams; the impure body imposes its material desires. Maybe the Hindus are right when they say the best a Westerner can do is to take a pious human birth in India in his next life. It may be true in my case. All the junk I have done in this life makes it difficult for me to fully enter Gaudiya Vaisnavism. Yet Prabhupada assures us that it's difficult, but not impossible.

“When I spoke with an abbot of a Carmelite monastery in Belgium, he seemed to think it was incredulous that Westerners were trying to live as Indian monks. I couldn't believe he couldn't see the essence of it. I don't claim to be an Indian or a Hindu, and neither does Srila Prabhupada make such an artificial imposition on us. The real strain and awkwardness is not to wear the *dhoti* or recite Sanskrit prayers—but the purity required. Any spiritual discipline I attempt, whether in a Western or Eastern tradition, will demand pure faith, spiritual vision, and heartfelt participation. I will have to bump up against my old conditioning until I finally throw it off. When we are free of sex desire and are convinced that the material world is miserable and useless—and when Krsna desires—we can enter His *rasa* dance, His pure spiritual world.

“That is what I was supposed to be praying for to Gopisvara Mahadeva last night instead of sitting there stupefied in the alien surrounding, disturbed by the loud ringing of bells and wanting to go home. Why couldn't I have looked on Lord Siva's face, his hair decorated with garlands, and prayed to him, ‘Please remove my lust and greed for material life. Help me, inspire me—you are the wisest sage and best Vaisnava, Lord Siva. Help this creature who sits before you and knows nothing auspicious. Help a Westernized pilgrim. I have come hoping for a dose of mercy to enter Krsna's pastimes. When do you think I can? What should I do now?’”

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From *Meditations and Poems*

pp.45-46

“After Reading Poets #3”

“After moon, it’s me. I meant to say after the
poets I’ll introduce you to God, Krsna,
the best friend of everyone. The atheist Wren
doesn’t believe, I grieve for that says
Prahlada and even the Supreme Lord
constantly desires
them to end their suffering but won’t
take away their free will.

I walked on grass like a golf lawn, back
and forth in red sneakers, chanting *japa* but
if you ask me what prayers I made,
I can’t remember and doubt I had
any fervent prayer I count to.

Hare Krsna. My reflection in the glass
door. Zipper up the coat. Put up the hood –
it was given to me in Canada, little Irish daisies
on the lawn,
hold on, don’t despair maybe
you’ll get an idea

after the poets you'd think I'd
 find a theme like childhood or forty poems to the moon
 as you travel in Yugoslavia. New one each night
 talking to moon like buddy and lover.
 Poets in the moon. But I have no theme. I
 am just relaxing and glad to have passed through
 another day. My Lord allowed me. My
 reading of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* wasn't great,
 but at least I tried. Gajendra's prayers coming
 to climax – he asks simultaneously for
 liberation from body pain and from materialistic
 life. He got both because the Lord is
 kind – you simply have to ask.
 My theme is God consciousness, Krsna torrents
 Krsna drops. My memories of people
 and will they write to me
 and I ping-pong a reply back? Krsna,
 the book, the day, I'm approaching You
 and asking for a reprieve.
 I'd be a devotee if it was easier."

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From ***Truthfulness, the Last Leg of Religion***

pp.17-18

"The Truth Is Eternal

“In his purport to the *Isopanisad* invocation mantra, Srila Prabhupada describes the Supreme Personality of Godhead as *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*. This is an all-inclusive term which reveals the Supreme's aspects of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Prabhupada writes:

“When one realizes the Supreme Person, he realizes these aspects in complete form (*vigraha*). Thus the complete whole is not formless. If He were formless, or if He were less than His creation in any way, He would not be complete.

“The complete truth, therefore, is not comprehended only by the quality of eternality. The Absolute Truth is not dead or static, but He can be known through loving relationships.

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead desires to associate in the exchange of loving service (*bhakti*) with all spirit souls who are His parts and parcels.

“Many of the spirit souls are already living with the Supreme in blissful exchanges in the spiritual world, but those souls who rotate in different species of life in the material worlds may also aspire to regain their complete harmony with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. An understanding of the dynamics of *bhakti*, as well as the actual practice of *bhakti*, constitutes real awareness of the Absolute Truth. This awareness of the truth in all things can take place even while one lives in the temporary material body within the temporary world:

““The completeness of human life can only be realized when one engages in the service of the complete whole. All services in this world—whether social, political, communal, international or even interplanetary—will remain incomplete until they are dovetailed with the complete whole. When everything is dovetailed with the complete whole, the attached parts and parcels also become complete in themselves.’ (*Isopanisad*, Invocation, purport)”

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From *Vaisnava Behavior*

pp.65-66

“Basic Principles”

“There is nothing else but Krsna. Or rather, there is Krsna and His illusory energy, *maya*. A devotee avoids the clutches of *maya* and the resultant sufferings of material life by fully absorbing himself in some form of authorized devotional service. ‘Seekers of the Absolute Truth are never lured by unnecessary engagement in sense gratification,’ writes Srila Prabhupada, ‘because the serious students seeking the Absolute Truth are always overwhelmed with the work of researching the Truth.’ (*Bhag.* 1.2.10, purport) When a disciple wrote to Srila Prabhupada confessing that she was confused, Srila Prabhupada recommended that she go on chanting but remain fully engaged in devotional work. ‘So you have sufficient engagement there?’ he asked in his return letter. ‘Because if we are not fulltime engaged then the mind is free to do its fickle business of rejection and acceptance for sense gratification. *Maya* will

immediately enter—we do not even have to call her—the moment we are not absorbed in Krsna's devotional service.' (Letter, July 20, 1973 to Govinda dasi)

“The varieties of devotional service are endless. They are dictated by one's personal preference and by the priorities set by the spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada used to say, 'Do the needful,' meaning do what is required to carry out the desires of the spiritual master. Sometimes the needful may be to collect donations for building a temple, or it may be to approach city officials to get a permit for the Ratha-yatra festival. The needful may mean comparing the prices of different printers for the best bargain in printing the spiritual master's books. Or it may mean a *grhastha* should go out and get a job. It may mean anything, according to time and place. Spiritual activities are not stereotyped, nor should they be confused with material activities. Based on the confirmation of Rupa Gosvami, a devotee knows that although the material world is full of misery, it is also spiritual because the devotee can engage everything in the service of Krsna.

“The activities of an advanced Vaisnava are inconceivable. He is always thinking of Krsna and he knows the art of how to engage everything in Krsna's service. When Srila Prabhupada was attempting to single-handedly publish his first volumes of *Srimad-Blagavatam* in India, he noticed that some of the nondevotees were puzzled about his activities. Sila Prabhupada wrote about this in the preface to his second volume of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*:

“They see that we are moving in the cities, in the government office, banks and other business places for promoting the publication of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. They also see that we are moving in the press, paper market and amongst the book binders also, away from our

residence of Vrndavana, and they conclude sometimes, mistakenly, that we are also doing the same business in the dress of a mendicant!”

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From *Journal and Poems, Book 1*

pp.121-22

“BEYOND DOGMATICS”

“To the nondevotees a guru is a monstrosity. They object to seeing someone being worshiped whom they think is like them. Some even argue that a person advocating a particular theology should not try to convince others. Some writers and thinkers question the honesty and artistic sensibilities of anyone who advocates one position absolutely. As Howard Nemerov states in *Journal of the Fictive Life*: ‘I have been twenty years in the poetry business without, so far as I can say, telling people what they ought to think; good art tells you only what you do in fact think.’

“I have also come upon a phrase, ‘more piety than poesy,’ to describe religious-minded poets. Again, the idea is that if one is a dedicated religionist, then he cannot produce real poetry because he is always thinking of ways to drive his message home.

“Atheists and humanists also question whether a religious practitioner can undergo self-scrutiny. In his book *At a Journal Workshop*, Ira Progoff purportedly teaches how to keep a journal that can lead one to self-actualization. But he several times advises abandoning any particular theological conclusion one might hold. Progoff thinks that if a person already has set conclusions, he will always be merely thinking of how to follow those doctrines already accepted and he will not be able to search for or express his true self. ‘How can you search for yourself if you claim that you already know the truth?’ Progoff might say. So if an ordinary spiritualist is decried

as being unable to face himself and reality, how much more so the guru will be decried by these critics, since the spiritual master is the living personification of scriptural truths and because he allows himself to be worshiped like God.

“Most of these attacks are based on misconceptions of spiritual life. I recall reading a letter by Vincent van Gogh in which he describes an incident where he declared himself to be ‘an artist,’ but a friend of his became offended by this presumption. Van Gogh explains that when he said he was an artist it did not mean that he claimed all perfection in art or that he had himself arrived at the truth. In saying he was an artist he meant, ‘I am trying.’ He thus humbly asserts his dedication to art. Similarly, a spiritual master or devotee can acknowledge the existence of the Absolute Truth without claiming to be a perfect devotee. But a devotee should not be condemned for speaking the Absolute Truth as revealed in scripture. And to say that no one can have absolute knowledge is to become an absolutist oneself.

“We should look upon the criticisms of the agnostic intellectuals as a challenge. Let us not ourselves be dogmatic or fanatical. Rather, let us prove in our life and works that we can see the world as it is and with fresh, individual vision. Let us assert that we are trying to see Krsna in all things, and let us explain logically and philosophically why He is actually the Ultimate Truth. And as we advocate our cause, let it be by works of art. Let us honestly express our own failings while at the same time explaining why we are committed to Krsna conscious truth.”

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pp. 65-66

“Jagannatha Bliss”

“Jagannatha is checked in to room 903.

How can the Lord
of the universe
be a Sheraton guest?
Because He consents.

“First thing to do
is make up His altar—
today He's in yellow,
Subhadra. red, Balarama blue.
And I'm collapsed beside Them.
Travel is exciting
if you choose as your companion
the best friend, enjoyer,
the ruler of all.
Nothing else really matters—
jets, buses, oceans,
the enormous world of nondevotion
that's all illusion.
But He is the center,
and I am His servant.
That's all that matters:
surrender.

“O Lord Jagannatha,
please save me,

please keep me,
 take me home.
 Keep me traveling. Keep me sick.
 Make me well.
 Whatever You want.
 Keep Your name on my mind.”

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

pp.136-37

“Just imagine all your association with Srila Prabhupada to be like a big ball of golden thread. Look at the ball and see if there are any threads sticking out, even small ones. Whatever you find, take it and start unraveling.

“Since I am near the ocean this week, I am thinking of Prabhupada walking on Juhu Beach. He is surrounded by devotees who come as close as possible to hear from him. Even nondevotees can see that a guru is walking with his disciples, but the inner meaning of what is happening is closed to them.

“Come close to Prabhupada and try to hear. Sometimes his words are blown away by the wind or lost in the crashing surf. ‘What did he say? What did he say?’ You feel a desperation to recapture his words, as if they were being blown out to sea.

‘Srila Prabhupada?’ He turns (or sometimes gives only a glance) and that is your cue.

“Prabhupada, how can we love Krsna?’ Our questions are sometimes impertinent, sometimes sincere. Prabhupada responds deeply, but it depends on the listener to remember and follow what he says.

“Prabhupada used to walk for half an hour on Juhu Beach. Then he would stop as if an imaginary line were drawn in the sand. ‘Should we go back now?’ His question was more of a statement. As one, we would turn and walk back to Hare Krishna Land. The vista was no longer pre-dawn but sunlight on the beach—pigs and donkeys running, people dressed in white out for their morning walk, coconut sellers, debris scattered here and there—it is Juhu, and Prabhupada is cutting a swath through.

“There is still time to ask him a question. He pokes his cane into the sand and turns to you. The devotees form a circle around Prabhupada.

“‘Prabhupada, they say religion is blind faith. If there is God, then show Him to me.’

“Prabhupada says, ‘You cannot see God because you are blind. However, everyone is not blind. If you want to see God, you have to come to one who has the vision.’

“What did he say?”

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

pp.53-54

“Everything in the universe happens by God's will (including time passing and the cock crowing). The demigods act in obedience to that will. By the will of God, *jivas* are born and live out their karma in prosperity or ruin, joy or sorrow. Without His sanction, the tiny *jiva* is unable to do anything. A follower of *saranagati* surrenders to this will. It doesn't take perfection in devotional service to attain surrender; it's the

first step. Only the stubborn fools continue to resist or think that there is no divine will.

“Still, it's a big first step. If we totally resign to surrender, then that surrender can deliver us to the further stages of devotion. ‘You are my protector and maintainer. Without Your lotus feet there is no hope for me. No longer confident of my own strength and endeavor, I depend solely on Your will.’ (*Saranagati* 3.4.6-7).

“Who is in touch with the great God? Who knows for sure how He operates in all things great and small? He who has faith and experience. Direct realization is rare. He who knows *vasudevah sarvam iti* is a *mahatma*. What am I compared to such a realized saint? I am someone who has sinned recently, but who repents it and realizes that the true taste of Krsna consciousness is better than playing it safe within religious codes. I am someone who has received the mercy of perfect Vaisnavas and yet hasn't gone far with it. ‘Bhaktivinoda is most poor, and his pride has been leveled. Now he lives or dies, as You wish.’ (*Saranagati*, 3.4.8).

“(The day is closed in with fog. No valley or mountains or blossoming trees, only white air in a wall. The birds’ melody goes on. And someone with a power saw. This is my 10-11 A.M. time. I'm not afraid of it. I dot my periods at the end of a sentence. Drink hot ginger tea.

“Some bird, I'll call it a wood cuckoo, is punctuating his three notes and another sounds like a woodpecker rapping, or maybe it's a telephone ringing. I'm listening from my hooded sweatshirt. I'm crouched in my mind, ready to spring. Don't want to speak beyond what is actually happening with me. But then . . . You've got to make a run for it.)”

From *Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name*

pp. 151-52

“I remember reading a statement about prayer by St. Francis De Salle. He said that even if you spent your whole hour of prayer in constantly putting your mind and heart into prayerfulness only to have it fly away, but then constantly putting it back again—that hour would be well-spent. It reminds me of Prabhupada’s statement that it is no wonder that people come to Krsna consciousness and then leave. Prabhupada said that *maya* is so strong it is a wonder that anyone stays at all. In paying attention, we could say that any moment where we do achieve attention is a victory. During any *japa* round, at any time that we are even aware that we are inattentive, and thus make an effort to be attentive—that is a brilliant moment.

“The optimistic viewpoint is all right, as long as it doesn't lead to slap-happy complacency. Being on the lower level shouldn't be a comfortable place. We have to struggle to get past it. But if at every moment you are inattentive and for the time being you feel helpless, some optimism is useful.

“Just showing interest in my *japa-sadhana*, chanting extra rounds, and reading statements about it has been helpful in combating *pramada*. Just to become aware of the enormity of the problem seems to be healthy. And also this dawning awareness for me that I have to work at the ABCs, and particularly on inattention, seems to be right. It gives me a purpose in life; it gives me more conviction that at least I know where I am situated and what I have to do next. Pay attention when you chant! Bring the wandering mind back again under the control of the higher self.”

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Writing Sessions

From *Write After Puja*

“1. *Light Green and Gold*

“This time we expect you to be composed, sanctified. Stop in front of the closed Deity doors and say prayers. to relieve you of offenses committed during this *seva*. Now . . . enter, touch the ground, you’re back on earth. You need to stay awake. Your friends will like to hear what you have to say. The dancers of *kirtana* have a wiggle to their happiness. They know better than me what word has to be written.

“The T.P. has a teepee announcement. The yawn is open. The glances of envy, compete, cut through. Perhaps prepare your drama, rehearsing and recording dreams—what was yours? Some intimacy is not healthy. Cruise along the long, dark street, it’s light in June just after *mangala-arati* or even before. Sun not, but light. I’m talking about Radha-desa, and a temple hardly anyone knows on a hill in Wheresphere. It’s nestled in trees and cows a few and refreshing in summer . . .

“The monk plays his clavichord. The birds are singing while flying. O heart, O mind, call to God. ‘Dream on, you poor fool,’ says the gremlin sitting on his head—you know you’ll get a headache, another Esgic.’ You’ll try to stay active.

“No, I don’t care for it. Is he enjoying where he shouldn’t? Is this going to leave us bereft? Behind in front. We have to be on top?

“My *puja* – Radha-Govinda were wonderful. White with trim, Hers blue, His peach. Earrings to match. My fingers perform for that purpose. Radha-Govinda. Sing with incense winding circles.

“A fly in this room bothering me. The dead flower. Hurry. Right after *puja* the people come up to you and say, ‘Can you fix me today?’

“You say, ‘I’ll think about it.’ Here is the telephone: ‘Make accommodations. I am coming with twelve people. Two of us are dainty, so make it nice and meet us at the airport.’ Coming from *puja*, you get distracted.

“Write after *puja* in your notebooks. Oh, I was on the altar dressing the Lord and thought of ... Please forgive me. I want to be pure. Right after *puja* no rouge for Her face. Keep like a plain *brahmacarini*. Our master writes to us and wishes us well, give us orders. See here, this has to be true.

“Write after *puja* a poem and scribbled notebooks for your own joy. I am a devotee of the Lord. *Stotra-ratna* tells us don’t have any attachments for family, just for Krsna. Don’t be allured, smeared. After *puja*, look forward to the next *puja*. Give me a little corner to write. I was thinking of You, Lord, as a rose garden carries the aroma...You are my body and soul. After *puja* the *pujaris* were taking off their earrings and galoshes and comic books in back pockets and said, ‘Hey, I’m going out to the field, Henry. You want anything from the hill?’

“Who said that? They got a letter in the temple from a guru who wanted to hold some meetings here with his followers.

“How many, ten thousand? Is he going to curse us if we don’t comply?

“No, he’s got a hundred at most, a mellow scene. Many are old-timers. We can allow it with some conditions. Oh boy, here’s come dawn and the chirping of birds. But in Eire it’s so dark...”

“The dawn. We go to the temple to be submissive. Bow down. Even if someone is not educated for studying the scriptures, he can bow down to the Deity and the

spiritual master in the temple and gain perfection in that way. Krsna in His form available.

“Stay awake. You see, we’ve been up since midnight and get very sleepy just now. So, after *puja* is an exercise in keeping awake?

“Why not sleep, nap?

“No, not now, got to go a few more hours. Then I’ll let you. I think you are a slow plover. Give us Krsna consciousness, cutey-pie, pie with whipped cream. And this guy he says he feels indifferent to food tastes as long as he can fill up. Well, give him a plain dessert and you’ll see him holler. Spumoni, tortoni ice cream but more. Tarts, tarts, keep me filled and I won’t say bad words.

“Smile, rise, and grunt, ‘Where is the topsoil for the *pujari*’s garden?’ Where is the awake power? Gambol awhile.

“After *puja*, bathe eyes in moonlight in dawn sky. Put on pants and run out to meet the fresh dawn. Quick, come back. Don’t be alone too long. I look for you. Life is short, shortening pie. My folks are from down south, bright Mississippi, yours are from where, Baton Rouge?

“No, I’m from Spencer, Massachusetts, I was born in a manger monastery there with monks, Keating and Basil Pennington attending. Jacob Needleman was my God Paw.

“Listen, after *puja* you should be like an angel, hair shaved from the armpits, talcum powder halo, nice guy, broken accent, wouldn’t hurt a fly. *Puja*. Poo ja. You were with God? You don’t look it.

“I was kneeling before the *murtis*. I am staying awake to tell it. I am not qualified to talk with Krsna. But not a fool iconoclast either. Want to love the Lord and Radha in my way. Please reveal yourself to me, Swami Jagannatha. Please be kind. I

was a worshiper back then. I won't leave this for Cross or Buddha way—I just check out their poems, so I can write mine better, Hare Krsna people even if taxed will have that tax paid by Krsna. Don't worry just be an unalloyed devotee. You will be blessed and when you meet people it will be a treat.

I want to tell you my ma
 is *Vedas* and pa is KC Vedic guru
 I am from Bright I'll return
 your Swami is favor
Bhagavad-gita is my guide
 I gather this for him after *puja*.”
