

Free Write Journal #16

November 18, 2018

We are reading Chapter Three of *Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila*, “The External Reason for Lord Caitanya’s Appearance.” It is “external,” but it is not unimportant, material or anything like that. It is Lord Caitanya’s introducing the mission of chanting the Hare Krsna mantra, the only religious sacrifice for the age of Kali. That is not minor. Rupa Gosvami says spiritual life begins with the tongue: chanting Hare Krsna and honoring food offered to Krsna (*prasadam*). The whole propaganda of ISKCON, for the mass of people, is to invite them to chant and accept *prasadam*. Now in the modern age, with the facility of the printing press, Srila Prabhupada pushed book distribution as “our family business.” This has resulted in his followers distributing millions of Krsna conscious books in dozens of languages. Book distribution has become an important reason for Lord Caitanya’s descent.

We will be reading the Fourth Chapter of *C.c.*, “The Confidential Reasons for Lord Caitanya’s Appearance.” Lord Caitanya (who is nondifferent than Krsna Himself) wanted to know the position of

Radharani in relation to Krsna. First He wanted to experience the identity of Radharani, but He could not do that because He was the Male Lover. Second, He wanted to know what was the beauty in Himself that so much attracted Radharani. This was another unfulfilled desire of Krsna. Finally, when Radha and Krsna are joined, They both feel unlimited bliss. But the bliss of Radharani is many times greater than that felt by Krsna. In order to taste these natures of Radharani: 1) What it is like to be Her, 2) What is the beauty in Krsna that attracts Her, and 3) What is the superior bliss that Radharani experiences when She is with Him--Sri Krsna descended as Lord Caitanya, with the golden complexion of Radharani and Her mood of *vipralambha*, intense love in separation. *Sri-krsna-caitanya radha-krsna nahe anya*: Sri Caitanya is the combined form of Radha and Krsna. He shared His ecstasies, speaking in the words of Radharani within the Gambhira at Jagannatha Puri with His confidential, intimate disciples. In ecstasy, His body transformed in extraordinary ways not even described in the scriptures. He would wander and sometimes fall down unconscious while experiencing the pastimes of Krsna and the *gopis*. His disciples would find Him and call out the Hare Krsna mantra loudly until He returned to His normal consciousness. This went on continuously for twelve years and is described in detail in the *Antya-lila* of *C.c.*

Manohara is very discriminating in what he hears from devotees' lectures. He finds that even senior devotees make mistakes, and he thinks they are not deep enough. This has prompted me to ask him why he chose me to be his spiritual master. My lectures are simple but *parampara*, and now I rarely give them. I have Manohara doing mainly menial *vapuh* duties, cooking, cleaning, massaging, and we have time for short conversations in which he inquires submissively and confidentially. If he is so critical of speakers making mistakes and lacking philosophical depth, why did he choose me to be his guru?

12:12 P.M.

I asked Manohara why he accepted me as his guru (since he's so critical of speakers, finds they make mistakes and don't go deep enough). Why did he choose me? I can't remember exactly what he said, but his response was good and reassuring. I'll try to put it in my own words. He was impressed that I was personal, that I followed Srila Prabhupada. He liked my books. I was honest, I confessed my struggle to improve and come to a higher level. I can't recall much more, but he sincerely accepts me and doesn't find fault or think I'm not deep enough. It was a satisfying exchange. He went on to say how much he likes Radhanatha Maharaja's talks and how he loved the lectures of Gopiparanadhana. He told me they

both said they make a prayer to Krsna before speaking (asking if He would help them glorify Him nicely, and they just spoke as they were inspired).

I'm going to ask Manohara more questions about his initiation. Was I the first to initiate him, or did he have a previous guru? Why did his wife, Visakha, choose me to be her initiating guru?

A Line About Prabhupada

He boarded the Jaladuta
in Calcutta at age seventy.
A scheduled thirty-five day
voyage to America.
He endured two heart attacks
at sea, and thought
if a third one came
he would die. The
story has been told
hundreds of times.
Such a fragile thread,
that sea journey.

And then the first
winter in New York City
with no response.
Then down to a
Bowery loft where
some young Bohemians
joined him in *kirtana*. Finally in spring '66,
Michael Grant found
him a storefront
at 26 Second Avenue
and they pitched in
to pay the first month's
rent (with no prospect
for the second month). But some young seekers
began to join him
for Monday, Wednesday, Friday 7:00 P.M.
Bhagavad-gita classes and
“transcendental sound vibration.” They came to accept him as their
spiritual master.

He eventually held
initiations, placed a handwritten paper
on the wall: “Disciples
chant sixteen rounds a day;
no illicit sex, no intoxication,
no meat eating, no gambling.”

He gave out assignments
in devotional service: edit his *Srimad-Bhagavatam*
manuscript, type them clean,
three boys go to work
to contribute to the rent.

Gather essays and poems
for a new *Back to Godhead* magazine.

Mimeograph and
sell them in the head shops
and in the streets, learn
to cook from the Swami,
paint transcendental art.

These services were not
rendered mechanically.

“If you love me
then I’ll love you.”

The boys were content to stay
on the Lower East Side
but the Swami had
worldwide plans.

In January ’67, he
left for San Francisco, writing
back to his New York
disciples that
serving the teachings
of the spiritual master was more
important than
serving in his
physical presence (*vapuh*).

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I received an important letter from the GBC Strategic Planning Team inviting me to three days of meetings in Mayapura in March 2019, to join with the members of SOBHA, “the newly formed group to give suggestions to the GBC. They directed me to simply reply, “Yes, I will attend.” They

further wrote that if I could not attend “because of health issues or other concerns,” I should inform them of that so that they can plan accordingly. I immediately sent them an email: “I have received your important email. Unfortunately, because of health issues, I will not be able to attend the meeting. Please excuse me. Your servant, . . . ” I thought of telling them more about my health issues, but I decided it wasn’t necessary. They weren’t asking for details.

Radha-Govinda Reciprocate with Me

Radha-Govinda in Their Vraja

outfits; simple red

with embroidered patterns.

Govinda in a simple green

turban. Radharani in

a single-strand

necklace, revealing Her

shape. It is a favorite

dress from Tapan

bucolic King and Queen

of the Vrndavana forest.

Everything is just right

post it on Facebook

so everyone can see.

Write quickly and don't look back. Reading Bukowski. He says living and writing are inseparable. I like that. But the *Journal* is hard to churn out. A young devotee named Aristaha sent me his poem from Facebook. He told me my Godbrother Vegavan Prabhu advised him to read (or hear) the songs of Bob Dylan. I wrote back and said I like Dylan. He wrote that he needs appreciation because he has low self-esteem. I told him that Emily Dickinson received no appreciation but wrote great poems profusely and kept them private.

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John noted that I want *Ars Poetica*, not merely dogma, in my presentation of Krsna consciousness. That's right, I want to write in the vernacular. (Bhaktivinode Thakura and Narottama dasa Thakura wrote in simple Bengali, not in Sanskrit) and I want to write informally and with artless art as a "writer of pieces." I place my short paragraphs in a mosaic with aspirations of free writing.

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November 19, 2018

We are on the Fifth Chapter of *C.c. Adi-lila*, “The Glories of Lord Nityananda,” which contain extra-long purports refuting Sankaracarya’s commentary on *Vedanta-sutra*. It is not easy reading, but we are proud of Prabhupada’s transcendental scholarship and victory over Sankara. Let us do our best hearing *Caitanya-caritamrta* with rapt attention. Don’t take any section as less interesting or less important.

You are making your weekly *Journal*. Baladeva is out shopping in the food stores for our vegetables for the Thanksgiving dinner. He is expecting big crowds in the stores. The way the first pilgrims celebrated this day in the seventeenth century and the way Americans celebrate it today is not a high expression of gratitude to God. At best, it’s a day of giving thanks for material well-being and abundancy, displayed by preparing a big feast. At worst, it is a sinful occasion, slaughtering millions of turkeys and eating their flesh. Humans should not eat flesh, and it cannot be offered to God in devotion. He will refuse to eat it as an offering. In the seventeenth century, the Pilgrims had been taught how to cultivate corn and succotash, and they

had potatoes and vegetables. In *Krishna Book*, these vegetarian items (“water, a fruit, a leaf, a flower”) can be offered to Krsna with devotion and He will accept it, and the remnants may be consumed as *prasadam*. Eleven devotees will gather at Ravindra Svarupa’s house. We may hold *kirtana*. We can talk *krsna-katha*. We can express thanks to Prabhupada for coming singlehandedly and bearing with him the entire Gaudiya Vaisnava *sampradaya*. By his act of sacrifice, thousands of devotees are purified and progressing in going back to home, back to Godhead. We show our thanks to Prabhupada by sharing Krsna consciousness with others and living the life of a devotee.

For Thanksgiving, we are offering Gaura-Nitai corn, succotash, mashed potatoes with gravy, tofu, vegetables, cranberry, pumpkin pie, carbonated grape “champagne.” We thank Lord Caitanya and Prabhupada for the *maha-mantra*, and we sing it in congregational *sankirtana*. Chanting the holy name cleanses our hearts of lifetimes of sin. The *kirtana* gives us a taste of the nectar for which we are always anxious. The *Siksastakam* prayer gives us the ideal for *nama-sankirtana*.

Prabhupada was once asked by an Indian guest, “What is your *siddha-deha* (his eternal identity)?” Prabhupada replied, “We can chant the holy name in a humble state of mind, lower than a blade of grass, more

tolerant than a tree, and ready to offer respects to others without expecting any respect for oneself. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy names constantly--This is our *siddha-deha*.” O Prabhupada, you knew expertly how to reply to those who impertinently pointed their nose into your confidential life. You presented yourself as a humble servant of your spiritual master (*dasa-anudasanudasa*). At seventy years old, you crossed the ocean on the personal order of your spiritual master.

He started modestly, chanting with loving followers at 26 Second Avenue and then with the hippies in San Francisco, then the explosion--centers in Los Angeles, Montreal, Boston, England, Hamburg. He found boys and girls willing to travel to foreign cities and face the austerities that he himself went through in New Delhi. He had entered the tea stalls and approached strangers with his *Back to Godhead* magazine. Now his disciples were doing the same. He traveled to his new centers and found they were mostly storefronts--the devotees didn't have much money, but they were enthusiastic and Prabhupada encouraged them, especially when they went out singing in public and distributed literature.

The Hare Krsna Movement is now over fifty years old; it has hundreds of temples and *ashramas* and over ten thousand active members. It has survived mistakes, misuse, and lost the charm of the early years when

Prabhupada knew all the devotees and they knew him. But in becoming an institution, it has gained the status of an influential world religion. ISKCON is not a new religion; its theology is not the concoction of some imperfect human beings. Its substance comes down in the timeless Vedic wisdom, taught aurally since time immemorial and set down in Sanskrit literature in India some five thousand years ago. In the Vedas (most prominently in the introductory work, *Bhagavad-gita*, Sri Krsna is declared the Supreme Personality of Godhead). Some five hundred years ago Sri Krsna descended again as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to teach the chanting of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra* as the only means to attain God-consciousness in the fallen age of Kali. Lord Caitanya is Krsna Himself, but He appeared in a disguised form as a pure devotee of Krsna. The Hare Krsna Movement (ISKCON) comes in strict disciplic succession of spiritual masters from Krsna, and is therefore capable of delivering the absolute truth right into the 21st century. Those who take to it wholeheartedly are fortunate and are entitled to make quick progress on the path back home, back to Godhead.

We have come to the best part of the chapter on Nityananda. It is Krsnadasa Kaviraja's personal story. A great devotee of Nityananda used to visit his house when they had *kirtana*. His name was Mineketana Ramadasa. Tears flowed from his eyes, and he manifested bodily symptoms

of ecstasy. All the people at Krsnadasa Kaviraja's house offered him obeisances, except the *pujari*. This *pujari* had a low opinion of Lord Nityananda. When Mineketana Ramadasa noted this he became offended, broke his flute and left the house. Then Krsnadasa Kaviraja had an argument with his brother. His brother had faith in Lord Caitanya but only a dim faith in Lord Nityananda. Krsnadasa Kaviraja chastised his brother, and at that time his brother fell down. That night, Krsnadasa Kaviraja had a dream in which Lord Nityananda appeared to him. He had a large, beautiful body covered with costly ornaments. He danced, and His devotees danced with Him. Lord Nityananda was pleased with Krsnadasa for reprimanding his brother. He spoke, "Krsnadasa, go to Vrndavana. There you will find all your desires fulfilled." Nityananda gestured in the direction of Vrndavana, and then He disappeared. When Krsnadasa awoke, it was dawn. He immediately started out for Vrndavana. Gradually he reached the *dhama* and was well-received by the devotees of Lord Caitanya. He worshiped the three main Deities, Madana-Mohana, Govinda, and Gopinatha. Eventually he began to write his book, *Govinda-lilamrta*, which all the Vaisnavas appreciated.

Typing for the Swami

Typing is yoga. You sit on the floor cross-legged in front of the typewriter. Instead of performing *pranayama* and raising the life air in the *chakras*, you type the words of Swamiji from the *Bhagavad-gita* manuscript. Concentrate and type, incorporating all the editing marks made by Hayagriva. If you make a mistake in typing, then stop and correct it. Everything is concentrated on looking at the message and making it right. Thinking of your typing as yoga gives a nice spirit to the work. But the most important thing is that it is in connection with Swamiji. It is his words of *Bhagavad-gita*. I kept pounding them out. When I was supposed to be calling on welfare clients, I would often drop in at my apartment and do an hour of typing, always pushing it on. The Swami was aware of what I was doing. He asked about the progress, and when I handed the work in, he handled it and said it was nice. We were both interested in these clean white pages with typing marks on them; his work was very dear to him.

He had bundles of thousands of pages that he had typed, wrapped up in saffron and lying on the floor in his closet. When he first took some typing out of this mass of material and gave it to me, I remarked, "I think you have enough work to last me a whole winter." Swamiji laughed and said, "I have many lifetimes of work for you."

After I'd been doing it for some months, Swamiji started using a Dictaphone. One day I stopped in at his apartment in the middle of my office workday to put in an hour on his manuscript. Swamiji kept the Dictaphone covered in his room except when it was in use. When I went in and got it, he noticed that I was dressed in shirt and tie from the office. He remarked, "You are still at your office work?" I replied, "Yes, but I go out and see clients. Right now, instead of seeing them, I'm coming to do this work. I am like Sanatana Gosvami, who stayed away from work in order to read the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*." As I said that, I was holding the Dictaphone and heading for the next room where Jadurani was painting, where the clotheslines were strung with Swamiji's clothes, and where the jar of ISKCON bullets was waiting in the corner. As I left his room, Swamiji smiled and said, "You are Sanatana."

Sometimes when I was typing in his second room, he would walk in and see what I and the others were doing. One time I stopped and said, "Swamiji, you just said on this tape that the Four Kumaras are eternal *brahmacaris*. How is it, that they could be eternal *brahmacaris*?" He'd reply, and then I'd go back into *samadhi*, locked into hearing his phrases and hearing the philosophy while typing. The typing work didn't go

through any secretary of Prabhupada's, but direct from him to me. When I returned a batch he asked, "Is everything all right?"

"Oh, fine Swamiji," I said. "I'm really enjoying typing the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*. It's wonderful how Krishna consciousness is the same as the yogis except we have more facility because the yogi can see Krishna only when he sits down and gets deep in meditation. But a devotee can see Krishna in His picture or chanting His holy names." It wasn't artificial for me to engage in *krsna-katha* about what I'd just been reading because I was filled with it by the typing. At least I could read something and then repeat it exactly as I had heard it.

In a practical way, I was connected to him, and my mind was saturated with Krsna-thought. You knew that you couldn't do nonsense because you had to type. Your time was taken up; you had to get up early, chant your rounds, type, go to work. A full life.

Swamiji said, "Never be idle." He had written an announcement and posted it on the wall: Always be engaged, and if you don't have any work, then chant Hare Krishna. This is how we worked for the Swami; different boys did different things.