

Free Write Journal #21

December 17, 2018

This is the twenty-first week of the *Journal*. It gets posted weekly on two websites. Should I compile them and publish as a book? Then I have *Prabhupada Reflections*, the daily entries I wrote during 2016, the 50th anniversary of Prabhupada's coming to America. They are substantial pieces, reflections on Srila Prabhupada. I would like to share them with readers. I love to make books on Prabhupada, and *Free Write Journal*. I should not do it seeking fame but to purify myself. Churn Krsna conscious topics and share them with devotees.

The children in the congregation of the Potomac temple put on a presentation of Krsna and Sudama Vipra. There were 35 children participating, from five to sixteen years old. The first group put on a little drama, with actors playing out the parts of the pastimes. Another group presented paintings: Sudama and his wife looking thin and niggardly-dressed, and Sudama's wife urging him to go see his former school friend , Krsna in Dvaraka and beg some charity; Sudama in Krsna's palace having his feet washed by the Lord while Rukmini fanned him; Sudama returning home and finding everything transformed, his house turned into an opulent

palace, his wife looking as beautiful as the Goddess of Fortune and surrounded with maidservants and male attendants. Each group of children presented some aspects of the lila. They also interacted with the audience, who loved the presentation. I heard this from Haridasa. He also told me he is listening to an audiobook, a biography of the Christian author C. S. Lewis. I read Lewis many years ago and appreciated his creative talent. His book *Mere Christianity* was popular with all denominations of Christians. Haridasa asked me if I would like to read the biography of C.S. Lewis and I said yes. I thought it might help me in writing accessible, interesting Krsna consciousness.

Sastra gave me a book, *Prema-vilasa* by Nityananda dasa. He was born after Caitanya Mahaprabhu's disappearance. His parents died young and he was left all alone. Jahnavi-mata appeared to him in a dream and told him to come to her and receive initiation. *Prema-vilasa* is written under Jahnavi-mata's direction and is about all the great devotees of Lord Caitanya who never met Him but live in loving separation from Him and try to follow His directions. Three devotees are given special attention: Srinivasa Acarya, Narottama dasa Thakura and Syamananda. They are each highly empowered, and they initiated many fallen souls.

Prema-vilasa contains the famous story of sending the books of the Gosvamis of Vrndavana to Bengal for copying and circulating among the devotees. In those days there were no printing presses, and so the precious works of the Gosvamis were packed up safely in trunks and carried by bulls in a bullock car entrusted to the care of Srinivasa, Narottama dasa Thakura, Syamananda and ten guards. The journey went well until they entered a province ruled by a cruel, violent king. The king's spies noted the cart and suspected that the big trunks contained jewels. The king ordered 200 soldiers to go and steal the cart and the bulls but to leave the devotees unharmed. The devotees were devastated by the loss of the only copies of the books, and they lamented. Srinivasa ordered Narottama and Syamananda to go to their homes while he stayed in the province and tried to discover who had stolen the books. One day Srinivasa met an innocent young boy who befriended him. The boy had access to the royal court, and he told Srinivasa that the king had recently captured a bullock cart filled with jewels. Srinivasa boldly entered the palace in mendicant dress and overheard the royal *pandita* lecturing on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to the king. Srinivasa spoke up and said the *pandita* was not speaking correctly on the scripture. The *pandita* became angry and demanded, "Who are you, and how dare you criticize me?" Srinivasa answered by speaking on the true

meaning of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He continued at length until the *pandita* and the king became humiliated and admitted defeat. The king submissively asked Srinivasa as to his identity. Srinivasa replied that he was one of a small group of devotees who were commissioned to carry sacred books from Vrndavana to Bengal, but their books had been stolen. The king confessed he had stolen the books, and he apologized and returned the books unharmed. When the news spread that the books had been recovered, the Vaisnavas rejoiced: “All glories to Srinivasa Acarya, who recovered the books!” They continued their journey unheeded and reached Bengal, where the books were copied and distributed.

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December 18, 2018

POEMS/ From EJW has undergone three proofreadings and is ready to be sent to Caitanya-candrodaya for layout, design and covers. It is best that Saci-suta, the Press manager, send the manuscript electronically to Caitanya because they have a business relationship and there will be no nonsense between them. I will phone John Endler today and tell him to immediately send the manuscript to Saci-suta. Caitanya-candrodaya wrote that he wants to get the book as soon as possible because he likes to have

plenty of time to get it ready.

John has been allowing devotees to get free dental care through his church. Last week Ravindra Svarupa went with John and had dental work done. Ravindra needs extensive repair, and he was given multiple appointments. Ravindra was very pleased with John for this treatment. He said he wanted to give John a name. He chose Bhaktijana, “one who is progressing on the path of *bhakti*.” Bhaktijana is very happy with his new name.

Although we have not published Volume One of *POEMS/From EJW*, Bhaktijana is already typing my poems and writing prefaces for a Volume Two. His enthusiasm is contagious, and I am allowing myself to be carried away by it. He’s even thinking of writing a booklet explaining how *EJW* came about and what its main themes are. He wants to induce readers to peruse the entire *EJW* opus.

I received an annual report on the distribution of my books in Russia from Ishana and Arjuna. They sold 1,096 books in about 30 titles. The Russian BBT sold six titles, making the total amount 2,725. In my last letter I had reprimanded Ishana for her “crazy” remarks in favor of the impersonalists and her criticism of me for not worshiping Lord Siva. Now,

on receiving this favorable report on book distribution from Ishana, I feel differently toward her. I wrote a thank-you letter to her and Arjuna. She is so unpredictable there is no telling what she will write me in the future, but I had to write her in gratitude for the book distribution in 2018. She is like the proverbial cow who gives plenty of milk but then kicks the pail over.

I received an email from Caitanya-candrodaya asking me to send the manuscript of the poetry book to him now. He wants to get to work early on the layout, design and covers, and when we are ready to print the book we can send him the money. He sent me images that he wants to use on the cover, and they were interesting. Saci-suta should have received an electronic version of the book today. I'm thinking of phoning him tomorrow and reading to him from Caitanya-candrodaya's letter. I don't want Saci to think I'm pushing him, but I would like to get things underway.

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December 19, 2018

You just start off writing.

In his poem, Aristaha

blesses his readers to become

more Krsna conscious. For himself

he craves appreciation

for his low self-esteem.

CC wants to put excerpts

from *POEMS* on the cover.

He showed me photos of

sculptural artwork

from my front yard

“Visionary Garden” in Wicklow. They

are all right, but I want

him to use canvases

that I painted indoors;

they are more clear.

He showed a nice photo

of me, looking a little
younger, with no fat
jowls around my neck.

I trust that CC will
do an excellent job.

Now the first step
is to get Saci to send
him the book.

Laura sent me a letter that she held a Gita Jayanti program in her home. She invited guests, and they each brought a copy of Bhagavad-gita As It Is. They read all the verses of the Gita, and she prepared an Ekadasi feast. I wrote her back telling her I had written a letter to Radhanath Maharaja recommending that he give her initiation. I told him of her qualifications and mentioned the selfless emergency service she rendered to Bala and Krsna dasi when Bala was undergoing a crucial surgical operation. I understand she plans to go to the Eco Village near Mumbai when Radhanath Maharaja is going to stay there with his disciples. She wants to associate with him and his devotees and hopes to be initiated by him. She will return here and continue rendering devotional service in this area.

Swamiji's Saving Grace

He saved me when I was in the darkness of ignorance. We should not forget, but keep alive, the memory of our conversion. Gratitude to Prabhupada as the one who saved us is more than gratitude for a past favor. Rather, we are in constant need of his saving grace, and he is always ready to protect us. Even after *diksa*, a disciple is constantly tested by *maya*. There is every chance that one may fall down again and return to his former ways. Even Lord Brahma is subject to illusion and suffering, and so he turns to the Lord: "I pray that in the course of my material activities I may not be deviated by the vibration of Vedic hymns." (*Bhag.* 3.9.24) Srila Prabhupada comments on this prayer:

"Brahma, as the supermost *brahmana*, is afraid of a falldown, and therefore he prays to the Lord for protection. This is a warning for one and all in the spiritual advancement of life. Unless one is sufficiently protected by the Lord, he may fall down from his spiritual position; therefore, one has to pray constantly to the Lord for protection and the blessing to carry out one's duty." (*Bhag.* 3.9.24, purport)

In the case of Lord Brahma, the Supreme Lord was his direct spiritual master, but in everyone else's case we should turn to both guru and Krsna. Our need for this relationship is an ongoing one, and this is another proof that the relationship is not diminished by time or confined to one act which our guru performed when we were neophytes and needed an initial pick-me-up.

At the time of Srila Prabhupada's disappearance from this world, his followers were forced to learn that their relationship with him continued by service in separation. Previous to Prabhupada's disappearance, we had heard of serving in separation, but now we had to learn it as a substantial fact of life. The fact that Prabhupada's followers could continue as before and increase their feelings of devotion, and even increase their serving capacity, proved that he was still very much with them.

Although in certain ways we may have grown up and matured, we remain disciples of Srila Prabhupada. After a few years of experience the disciple knows what he is supposed to do, and so he follows the rules and regulations and discharges routine duties. He doesn't need to be constantly told these things. One also comes to know that the strength for performing devotional service is given by Lord Krsna in the form of transcendental knowledge. But even when one knows these facts and preaches them to

others, the active ingredient is always the guru's mercy.

A warrior may possess a good weapon, but unless he has the strength to pick it up and use it, he will be defeated. The strength for fighting *maya* is a spiritual strength (*bala*) which is given by the grace of Lord Balarama. The spiritual master is the representative of Lord Balarama, and so it's to him we should pray for ongoing protection. (We may make a distinction here between meditation and prayer. Prayer is a type of meditation but with the emphasis on personal importuning. In the example of Lord Brahma previously quoted, he was petitioning the Supreme Lord and urgently requesting His help.) Prabhupada states, "The only prayer to make to Krsna is, 'Dear Lord, please give me the strength to serve You.' Any other prayer, you'll never be happy." (Lecture, August 1975)

As Prabhupada's mercy is the constant factor for spiritual success, so his disfavor will be the direct cause of falldown. Therefore we should always be aware of the gross and subtle forms of *guru aparadha*. But all dangers on the path, such as continued temptations from *maya*, or the committing of offenses to the guru, can be mitigated by sincere attempts to follow the teachings of Lord Krsna as given by His pure devotee. We need not be depressed by the fact that we're always in need of help and that there is danger at every step. All we need is to constantly be aware of our weakness

and turn to the one who can save us. As Prabhupada advises, “We must simply pray: ‘Krsna, please pick me up.’” Not just once.

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December 20, 2018

Lord Caitanya met Ramananda-Raya on the bank of the Godavari River. In their eternal identities, Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krsna and Ramananda-Raya is Visakha devi. So on meeting, their natural love was aroused; they embraced and manifested bodily symptoms of ecstasy. Seeing that Ramananda-Raya’s entourage included many ritualistic *brahmanas*, Caitanya Mahaprabhu checked His emotions. Thereafter, the two used to meet in seclusion. Caitanya Mahaprabhu played the part of placing questions, and Ramananda-Raya gave the answers. In the beginning Ramananda-Raya gave answers that were external. Lord Caitanya asked him if he could speak something higher, and Ramananda-Raya finally discussed spontaneous love of God. Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked Ramananda-Raya if he could speak something higher, and Ramananda answered in terms of *madhurya-rasa*, the relationship of conjugal love. Ramananda-Raya said that he was just a puppet, and Lord Caitanya was the puppeteer. Ramananda said that he was only speaking what Sri

Caitanya Mahaprabhu allowed him to say. When we took turns reading this section at lunchtime, it was so absorbing that we lost track of time and continued for 45 minutes without noticing the clock and stopping.

There is some delay in sending the poetry book to Caitanya-candrodaya. Saci asked me why John can't send it, but I insisted that Saci has to do it. (Saci is very busy and doesn't like getting involved in Press affairs.) But Caitanya doesn't know John and may be disturbed to receive the book from John rather than from the man he looks up to, who he considers his boss, "the Press manager." John wants Saci to pass on some information to CC about how the contents should be organized, but I'm afraid Saci may consider this too much of a burden. I'm in the middle of this; it's a matter of delicate devotee relationships. I know what I want them to do, but I can't push too much.

18.

The devotees who want to be
servants of Krsna are better than
those who want to be equal with Him.

Even the Visnus are servants of Krsna
and although Radharani controls
Krsna, She actually considers Herself His
humble maidservant. The whole realm of love of God
is based on the parts serving the whole.

Mother Yasoda chastises her son
but serves Him always with her
life-breaths. Nanda Maharaja
does as his seven-year-old
son bids him to on Govardhana Hill.

Everyone is already serving Krsna
by the rod of His material
nature; no one is free.

But when we turn the energy
to devotional service, the world becomes
harmonious and everyone becomes happy.

19.

I painted Sukadeva Gosvami with

no clothes and his hand in *jnana-mudra*.
Maharaja Pariksit was kneeling before him
and various *sadhus* sat around to listen.
A *sannyasi* like Jayadvaita Swami
stood with a *danda*. As time
ran out I hastily added
a stout brown tree bearing blue blossoms
and painted a red mat
for Sukadeva to sit on. The black pupils of their
eyes and the white Vaisnava *tilaka*
came out successful.
But two red mouths were exaggerated.
The entire outing was fun
and Baladeva gave brief approval.
I emerged from the basement
tired, but like a man who has
contributed to world culture.

20.

To write a poem you have to wait
ten years and then cry out, “Who
among the angels would answer
if I cried out?” And the answer
comes back, “No one.” But you
have already started your poem,
dictated by the gods. Anything
short of that is premature rubbish.
But I can fashion my rural pen
and write down songs of innocence
for every boy and girl.
And I’m old enough to write
my songs of experience.
I’m reminiscing daily
with Baladeva from
writing assignments he’s
created: “How did you
really feel when disciples
left you?” It’s December

and I hear the geese
from Canada flying south.
I've got my first
bout with pneumonia
and I'm taking antibiotics.

My disciple Nitai and his wife have two children. The oldest, Gopi-manjari, is seven years old and attends public school in New Delhi, India. On special occasions, Gopi's whole class goes to a Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant and they eat chicken wings. An exception is made for Gopi-manjari, and she is allowed to bring a tiffin of *prasadam* that her mother prepares at home. Her mother is careful to cook the best savories and sweets so Gopi won't be sad that she is not eating meat with her classmates. But how degraded India has become! The big cities have all the American fast food chain stores, including the cow-killing McDonalds ("90 trillion served").

Kirtana-rasa told me he heard on the news that an Indian multi-billionaire is spending over \$100 million on his daughter's five-day wedding. This is going on while millions of Indians don't have toilets.

In *Caitanya-caritamrta*, Lord Caitanya keeps asking Ramananda-Raya if he can speak something more. The Lord even rejected *Bhagavad-gita* 18.66--“Just give up all varieties of religion and surrender unto Me.” Caitanya Mahaprabhu said it was “external.” Ramananda-Raya is now speaking on *madhurya-rasa*. He says it is the highest of all and contains all the qualities found in the other main *rasas*: servitude, friendship and parental. Lord Caitanya accepts this--He has accepted everything Raya has said since he stated *spontaneous love of God*--but He wants to hear more. RR is now speaking elaborately on Radha and Krsna, and Lord Caitanya keeps asking for more.

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December 21, 2018

What Can You Write?

We have so many Deities and pictures of Radha-Krsna in this *ashram* that it is not possible to observe the sixty-four rules regarding behavior before the Deity. “One should not turn one’s back toward the Deity; one should not point one’s feet toward the Deity; one should not eat before the Deity; one should not pass air before the Deity; one should not undress

before the Deity . . .” We have surrounded ourselves with Deities and cannot move without committing an offense. It is a dilemma, but a nice one. We should be as careful as possible, but ask Krsna to forgive us for not obeying all the rules. We asked to live in an atmosphere of Krsna images, and now we have to do it as reverently as we can. Serving the Deities with zero realization is idol worship. Attaining full devotion, we accept the *arca-vigraha* as nondifferent from Krsna Himself: *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*, (“the eternal form of bliss and knowledge”). *Arcye visnau -sila-dhir*: “One who thinks the *arca-murti* in the temple is a material object, lives in hell.”

Ramila d.d. sent me a report of how she observed my Vyasa-puja in Mayapura on December 21st, Moksada Ekadasi. She did the whole thing herself with no one to help her. She gathered many ingredients for cooking, flowers for an altar, and invited guests. She was nervous (about the cooking) but very happy, meditating on serving her spiritual master. One of her guests told the story of how I phoned the Swami from the welfare office and told him I couldn’t make it for the noon lunch gathering; I had to stay and work until 1:00 P.M. Could he please save a plate for me? Swamiji assured me he would save a plate. I went to his apartment at 1:00 P.M. and found him alone. He placed a plate on the floor and stood over me. I bowed

at his feet (for the first time) on my hands and knees and heard him say, “Yes.” He left me alone to eat (rice, *dal*, a vegetable and *capatis*), and it was all delicious and nourishing.

The devotee who told the story had to tell it again when more guests arrived. Ramila wrote to me that she loves to hear it again and again. I love to hear it also. (When I phoned the Swami, he answered and I said, “Swamiji, this is Steve. Do you remember me?” He replied, “Yes.”) Ramila wrote that the Vyasa-puja was a wonderful day. She especially likes it when other devotees praise me or read from my books. I thought that Ramila’s celebration of my birthday was probably the best in the world, even better than the one I participated in at Stuyvesant Falls. Ramila was so determined and devoted to take it on singlehandedly.