

Free Write Journal #23

December 31, 2018

5:15 P.M.

Talking with Manohara about the year's end. He said that we devotees, because of our *sadhana*, are not much affected by worldly changes. I remembered 19 years ago, the Y2K phenomenon. Many people believed the change in the millennium would bring about catastrophic events; the computers would break down, communications would be disturbed, food shortages, etc. etc. But nothing happened. It was a big hoax. Yet many ISKCON devotees believed in it. Tomorrow the year will change to 2019, but it will not change things for us. We will observe Ekadasi. Tonight we will not drink any alcohol, and we'll go to bed early. We don't take part in New Year's Eve.

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January 1, 2019

4:30 A.M.

So it's the new year. I have chanted my minimum quota of rounds.

Now I can write. The Prabhupada *murti*, wearing a day-old flower garland and a saffron *chadar*, sits facing me. He is accepting my obeisances and bestowing mercy. Radha-Govinda are my worshipable Deities. The painting of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, commissioned by King Prataparudra, is the easiest to look at. I think it bears a high resemblance to what the Lord actually looked like. Caitanya-candrodaya should have all the files to *POEMS* by now. He wanted them early so he could have plenty of time to work on them. Saci-suta is taking part in a race today. It's called "The Hangover Run," but he won't have any hangover. I will write a letter to Bhurijana thanking him for writing *The Backward Glance: A Detailed Overview of the Eleventh and Twelfth Cantos of Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The Eleventh Canto contains the *Uddhava-gita*. It made me convinced and euphoric as I read Krsna's incessant and repeated teachings to Uddhava that *bhakti* unto Krsna is the highest goal. Bhurijana gathered extensive quotes from the *acaryas*, *sastras*, the BBT edition, and Srila Prabhupada, to support Krsna's "Only *bhakti* unto Me" conclusion. The Twelfth Canto gives graphic descriptions of the degradation of Kali-yuga and the destruction of the Yadu Dynasty. They are all fascinating, accounts of Maharaja Pariksit's departure from the earth and Lord Krsna's returning to His own abode. Bhurijana is doing a great service to the devotees with his

in-depth overviews. How dedicated and well-researched his books are! The overviews are on a par with *Srimad-Bhagavatam* itself. I implored him to give priority to this project and complete all the Cantos. Generations of devotees will be grateful into the future.

Krsna dasi just changed Radha-Govinda's clothes. I chose the outfits, trying for something unusual. They are wearing black with ornate embroidered yellow patterns. The *darsana* is exciting and beautiful. Krsna dasi says every time she dresses Them (a new one every three days), she thinks, "*This* is the best outfit." Radha is golden; Krsna is also golden (as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu). Today They are both decorated in yellow (gold). I will have three blissful days of *darsana*--until another refreshing change.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu doesn't stay long in Vrndavana. After two years of attempting to reach Vrndavana but meeting impediments (created by His devotees, who couldn't bear separation from Him), He finally goes and experiences highest ecstasies at the places of Krsna's pastimes. But His servant, Balabhadra Bhattacharya, is disturbed by Lord Caitanya's extreme manifestations. At Akrura Ghat, the Lord submerged Himself deep in the water and had to be rescued by Balabhadra Bhattacharya. Caitanya

Mahaprabhu's servant conferred with the Sanodiya Brahmana and expressed his desire to take Mahaprabhu out of Vrndavana. The *brahmana* advised Balabhadra Bhattacharya to ask the Lord Himself. Balabhadra Bhattacharya did so, and the Lord was submissive. The servant proposed that they go to Prayaga via the Ganges, and at Prayaga they could observe the Kumbha Mela and bathe in the sacred rivers. But even in Prayaga the Lord experienced extreme Vrndavana ecstasies. He saw the black waters of the Yamuna and jumped in. When He was returned to the boat, He continued dancing and almost sunk the boat. And then He heard a cowherd boy playing a flute and He fell unconscious. Lord Caitanya was almost too ecstatic to be safely contained within the world.

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January 2, 2019

5:00 A.M.

I've had a sore throat for a week. I use a spray and lozenges, but they bring only short-term relief. There is a medical student staying with us, and I will ask her to look down my throat. Otherwise, we are planning to go to the walk-in clinic and see if they will give me a prescription for something

stronger.

We light five incense sticks at this time in the morning. The top ash remains firm for five minutes, and then it topples over. The columns of smoke rise straight in the air. My olfactory organ is so weak that I cannot smell the incense (Sri Sai Flora). But we are burning the incense for the Deities' pleasure, not mine. And other devotees confirm it produces an auspicious atmosphere. It's for Radha-Govinda, Gauranga, Srila Prabhupada, Laksmi-Nrsimha, and I'm satisfied with that. Muktavandhya comes once a week and brings flowers. The flowers and incense produce a sublime situation for Radha-Govinda.

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I have started a new project. I speak "writing practice sessions" into a Dictaphone. I send them to Guru dasa to type, and when he sends them back to me I will select excerpts to put into the *Free Write Journal*. I have already done three half-hour sessions, and I liked how they came out. I was able to speak much more than I could write with my slow penmanship, and I didn't speak much nonsense. This is a good new thing.

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January 3, 2019

I want to go on writing. I love the freedom on the page. Reading *Caitanya-caritamrta* is very enlivening. Lord Caitanya has gone to Vrndavana and left. At Prayaga He has met Vallabha Bhatta, who became Vallabha Acarya of the Vallabhacarya-*sampradaya*. At Prayaga He also meets with Rupa Gosvami and instructs him in *bhakti-rasa*. These out-loud reading sessions are very valuable.

Keep speaking. Go on reciting. Go on reciting. Lord Caitanya spoke like this on several occasions when devotees were speaking on confidential topics. Go on reciting. So I tell myself to break the silence and go on speaking. I am sitting before Radha-Govinda in Their black-and-yellow outfits. They are stunning. They are beautiful. I am close enough to Them to see Their features of face. Radharani is a young girl. Krsna is an adolescent youth but manly, strong, effulgent. These dresses today are a little fancier than the usual Vraja fashion that Tapan produces for me. But it's still not Vaikuntha, it's Vrndavana on a dress-up day/occasion. All the *gopas* and *gopis* would gather together. Sometimes Radha and Krsna like to be alone together. She sometimes felt She wasn't getting enough attention if there

were lots of other *gopis* present. But She wished the others well and tried to set up rendezvous for them with Krsna. Radha-Govinda are my *ishta-devata*. That is why I do not like to take Christian reading so seriously. It impinges on my desire for exclusive devotion unto the Vrajavasis.

Manohara mentioned to me that at the time of Lord Caitanya's appearance there were many Christian communities in India. But Krsnadasa Kaviraja and Lord Caitanya make no mention of them. We hear about the Mayavadis, the Buddhists, the Tattva-vadis, demigod worshipers, but we don't hear of Christ. There is a purport about Vasudeva Datta desiring to take the sinful reactions of everyone in the world on his own head.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati comments that this means Vasudeva Datta was many times more compassionate than Jesus Christ, who rescued those persons who surrendered to him, whereas Vasudeva Datta wants to rescue all souls, regardless of whether they follow Lord Caitanya and Krsna or not. That is a hard passage in *Caitanya-caritamrta* for the Christians to read.

Prabhupada showed himself as an ecumenical preacher, especially when he traveled in Europe and met with priests and seminarians. He was friendly to them and gave inclusive lectures. When asked by the Franciscan seminarian at their monastery what Prabhupada thought of St. Francis, who addressed the various energies of God as "Sister Moon, Brother Sun"--

and later in life he added “Brother Death”-- Prabhupada widened his eyes and said, “*That* is real God consciousness.” Traveling in Europe and meeting Christians, he said all they had to do was chant the name of Jesus and stop eating meat.

We are sailing along. We are not talking nonsense. We have enough Krsna consciousness in us to keep us on the track. Just remembering Swamiji from the time period when we called him by that name, I have so many fond memories. I treasure them, and I have shared them with others in my writings.

Today the medical student is going to look down my throat to see if she can find the source of my soreness and irritation. If she can't find anything, we plan to go to an outpatient clinic and hope to get a prescription for something stronger than the throat spray and lozenges that I have now and which give me only temporary relief. As Jayadvaita Maharaja likes to quote, “As the sages say, if it's not one thing, it's another.” Maharaja wrote me an affectionate letter for Vyasa-puja saying he was my friend and he had a place for me in his heart. This is true. He doesn't expect me to return to the front lines of the “powerful and tumultuous” ISKCON. In fact, I do not intend to make another trip to visit India, even to see the opening of the planetarium temple in Mayapura. Ishana remarked

sarcastically, that ISKCON is building the tallest temple in the world but is neglecting its members, especially the *grhasthas* and women. I thought there was some truth in what she said.

Prabhupada wanted the planetarium temple, and it will come about. Other temples are also being constructed. I don't even live in a temple; I live in an *ashram* of four devotees with constant visitors. I hardly ever go out from the house, and I don't visit temples or attend *kirtana melas*, such as the *kirtana mela* that's held in North Carolina, to which thousands attend every year and hear the *kirtanas* of the wonderful singer Madhava Prabhu. Last year he came to Stuyvesant Falls and held a *kirtana* right across the street in Saci-suta's yoga studio. That I was able to attend, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. He keeps the same tune and the same beat and rhythm and goes for an hour and a half.

I am able to stay on the track and steer to Krsna. I am not a bad person. I am not malicious. In my dreams I sometimes see women, and I'm attracted to them. But that's only in dreams. Still, it's an unpleasant warning, that I'm nearing death and still dreaming of women. I want to think of Krsna at the time I pass away. I don't want to be like the man in the story who was on his deathbed and was visited by the emperor and his young daughter. The ill man had asked his secretary, "How long does sex

desire last?” and his secretary said, “Right up until the end of life.” The man was doubtful of this, but the secretary told him he would demonstrate it. So when the emperor and the young woman entered his room, he looked to the woman, not the emperor. The secretary later told him, “You see what I told you?”

Lord Caitanya was very strict as a *sannyasi* about His association with women. I am strict also, but I have a scar from a fall down about ten years ago. That scar will remain. But I think I have been forgiven by Prabhupada and Krsna because of my repentance and my rectification and returning to strict *sannyasa*. However, I don't wear the robes of a *sannyasi*, except on special occasions. I align myself with Hridayananda Maharaja's "ISKCON West" movement and wear saffron-colored clothes. I am comfortable in my own skin and my talking voice does not want to go into *maya*. I want to talk about the practice of Krsna consciousness. I am not speaking an overview in detail on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* cantos as Bhurijana Prabhu does. But honesty is flowing from my mind and heart. When will the day come when I chant Hare Krsna and tears flow from the eyes, the voice is choked up and the hairs stand on end. That is not the true test of *bhakti*, but there are steady ecstasies that Rupa Goswami mentions like being very careful not to waste a minute's time outside of Krsna's service. I am doing that now. I am

surrounded by fences of *sadhana-bhakti*. I am an aspiring devotee.

Radha and Krsna are the supreme Divine Couple. I exclusively worship Them and Gaura-Nitai and Prabhupada. They are my solace in life. I do not travel to Vrndavana or Mayapura, but I live there in my mind. I heard someone speak of “New Year’s resolutions,” then I thought whether I should make some. The first thing I thought of was, “I resolve to improve my *japa*.” I also resolve to go on writing for my somewhat small but faithful audience. I will continue to take part in the out-loud readings from Prabhupada’s books at mealtimes. I will try to see all living entities as spirit-souls, although it is sometimes difficult.

I think of Krsna in the *Gayatri* mantra three times a day. First I offer obeisances to the sun. But it’s actually not the sun god as a separate demigod but the Supreme Lord, Narayana, who is the sun. Then there are two *guru-gayatri* mantras. I offer my obeisances to the spiritual master. Let me try to understand my spiritual master, who is always in blissful Krsna consciousness. Let me meditate upon him being enthused just as he enthused us. I meditate upon Prabhupada being somewhere. He is not dead. He is not buried under his *Samadhi*. He has gone on to a new life somewhere, somehow. Either he has gone to Krsna-loka or he is preaching

somewhere, maybe in the material world, just as he preached for eleven years here in the twentieth century. He's enthusiastic, and he has made us devotees enthusiastic. We wish to be with him in the next life wherever he is. Then we make our obeisances to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He is with His devotees, but we pray to Him as individuals also. Let me make my obeisances to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is understood to be the maintainer of the universe and who entuses us to do so. Then, two *kamagayatri* mantras. I don't understand them deeply, but I like to recite them and I'm reciting them while looking at my Radha-Govinda in Their black-and-yellow dress, so charming. I offer my obeisances to Krsna, Govinda, who is the lover of the *gopis*. Let me meditate upon the Master of the Senses, who carries the arrows of flowers. Let me meditate upon Him being enthused by the transcendental Cupid. As I look at my Radha-Govinda, I think, "Who better could the transcendental Cupid be but Radharani Herself, who entuses Krsna?" One could go deeper on this, but one has to have a pure heart. I meditate and I make my obeisances to *gopi-bhava*. Bhanu Swami says *gopi-bhava* here means Srimati Radharani. And that's how we think three times a day about Krsna. And in the early morning we chant the Hare Krsna mantra thousands of times. Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

The meaning is, “O Radha! O Krsna! Please engage me in Your service.”

This is a transcendental sound vibration. There are ten offenses against the holy names. One has to avoid them and come to the clearing stage. One should not chant with offenses, but if one does the answer is to chant incessantly. Chant sixteen rounds on beads and innumerable times off the beads. It is a very serious proposal. It is a very easy thing to do. You don't have to be a big meditator. But you concentrate on each mantra one at a time, and you chant with love. All glories to the Hare Krsna mantra!

I am at a neophyte stage. I don't have great love for devotional service. I perform my minimal amount of devotional activities. I have done a great amount of writing in my lifetime, but now I'm winding down. Still I may have some years left in which to share -- through writing -- Krsna consciousness to the world.

Share

Share what you've heard

from your spiritual master.

Share the *Caitanya-caritamrta*.

Share the good news.

Everyone can share

everyone can take part
everyone can sit down
and honor the *prasadam*.

Everyone can lead.

Everyone can respond.

Everyone can lead
and join in the chorus.

“A little louder,
from the heart.”

This was spoken by the *kirtaniya*
as he led us in chanting Hare Krsna
the same melody
and the same beat
for an hour and a half.

I was attentive and entranced.

From my chair I sat and participated
in the congregational *sankirtana*.

There were a hundred devotees
in the room
following the *kirtaniya*

who led us into bliss.

Chanting Hare Krsna

comes straight from Krsna-loka

but Bhaktivinoda Thakura says,

“With chanting I have no connection.”

If the great Thakura

sings like that

in his humility

what can be said of me?

I *do* have a connection

with Hare Krsna from my spiritual master

who chanted on my red wooden beads

some 52 years ago.

That connection will be unbroken

even as I no longer breathe

in this body.

I will go on chanting

in the next life.

And on the second day of this new year

I’ve resolved

to improve my *japa*.
I am handicapped in many ways.
But I still pray to the Lord
to engage me in His service
and clear away the filth
from my flickering mind.
If I can chant Hare Krsna
even silently
I will hear in my mind
the joyous sounds
made by the *acaryas*
in *parampara*. If I try my best
Krsna will help me
to practice the *japa*
and be active in His service
spreading the mission of Mahaprabhu.

“Go on reciting! Go on reciting!” The *gopis* of Vrndavana the
greatest worshipers of Krsna, and at the summit, Radha-Krsna, the *yugala-*
kishora. I am comfortable in my voice and happy to be given the time to

salute the great *acaryas* and the devotees who are alive today. And more to come in the future, all over the universe. I salute them as a humble member of the order. I cling to the memory of 1966, when I came to the storefront and went in the door. I chanted Hare Krsna with the Master that night and learned how to get the mantra words correctly. I went home chanting them in my heart.

I am not a strong soldier. I am not much of a scholar or patient reader of his books. But I take it in daily in rationed amounts and talk about it later with Manohara dasa. We are in the *Caitanya-caritamrta*, and the Lord is in Prayaga with His one servant, Balabhadra Bhattacharya. And He's feeling so much ecstasy, sometimes falling unconscious, that it seems the world cannot contain Him in His ecstatic extreme. One day He'll leave the world, after converting millions to the Vaisnava way by chanting the holy names in an entrancing way and showing the bodily symptoms of a pure devotee who cannot hide that He's actually the Supreme Lord, although He tries to act as an ordinary *sannyasi*. I begin this new year with hopes in my heart that I will have more time for writing, and that it will be good enough to share with the devotees in the *Free Write Journal*. A very, very few readers respond to me and say they like it. I derive satisfaction from their encouragement. But even if only one or two read my postings, I will go on

posting the *Journal*.

In the early morning, by 4:00 A.M. (or earlier), I begin my *japa* practice silently in my mind. I do it in a not-so-orthodox way but excuse myself, saying I'm fragile, I'm old, I need protection; I cannot concentrate so much or I'll develop a headache. Thus I excuse myself from not intently chanting out loud. But even Haridasa Thakura chanted the first third of his enormous quota in his mind. The second third of the 300,000 Names he chanted in a whisper he could hear. And the final one-third he chanted out loud. He was the *namacarya*, the great saint who knew no fear and gave us the example of unbreakable *sadhana*, of single-pointed devotion to chanting the holy names. He had no time for anything else. He was above the modes of nature. All glories to Namacarya Haridasa Thakura!

All glories to the greatest *gosthyanandi*, who appeared in 1966 in a little storefront and gathered followers who chanted with him through the summer, fall and winter until he went to San Francisco to open his second branch. He tolerated illnesses and went back to Vrndavana, India, to recuperate his health. He revived there and came back to join his spiritual children, who were growing in number and taking shelter at his lotus feet. His Movement grew rapidly as he traveled to new centers where his

disciples had opened up storefront temples, and better temples. Then he went back to India and prayed and endeavored to build three great temples: in Vrndavana, Mayapura, and Mumbai. Now there are hundreds of his temples all over the world, even underground ones in China and other oppressive places. They are going on by the momentum started by Lord Caitanya and picked up by Srila Prabhupada taking it out of India and taking it around the world. He was the first to do it.

I thank my spiritual master for not kicking me away although I'm fallen and have made many mistakes. He maintains me and retains me. I just ask a little attention and recognition in the corner of his heart. I used to be one of ten or twelve, but now I'm one of millions and semi-retired from active service. But he'll keep me until the end, and I'll go on reciting the glories of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and all His many associates as recorded by Krsnadasa Kaviraja in *Caitanya-caritamrta*. And in a purport to that book, Prabhupada has written that in the future there will be books about the many devotees of Mahaprabhu who came and spread His glories in the modern age. It is a very wicked age, and we have to speak out against it but emphasize the spiritual by chanting *hari-nama*. Now I lay me down to sleep/ I pray the Lord my soul to keep/ and if I die before I wake/ I pray the Lord my soul to take.

This simple prayer uttered in sincerity is a pure cry to be with the Lord after this body is over. I pray the Lord my *soul* to take. The body will remain here and be buried or cremated or eaten by worms. But the soul, the shining, immortal particle of God, cannot die, cannot be cut, cannot be burnt and wants to be with Krsna in the eternal abode. So if I die before I wake/ I pray the Lord my soul to take.