

Free Write Journal #36

Free Writes

Dais

For the first year at 26 Second Avenue we had no *vyasasana* for Prabhupada. We had only built him a wooden platform with a pillow on it and a backrest. In a lecture from that time, Prabhupada said, “I am sitting on this dais . . .” He went on to say that the dais was offering him service in an inactive way, like *shanta-rasa*. Lord Visnu is served by an incarnation who offers Him bed, slippers, etc., and this is considered as *shanta-rasa*. It is not very advanced because there is no active offering of service. Lord Caitanya’s devotees all related to Him with a special form of *dasya-rasa*, or the relationship of servant to master. Their relationship was not ordinary *dasya* but very special, as the Lord led them in the ecstasy of *sankirtana*. Then they joined with Him intimately. Pure devotees do not aspire for *shanta-rasa*, but they begin their relationship with the Lord in *dasya-rasa*.

Morning Walks

When Prabhupada had his stroke in 1967, a doctor told him he should take

daily walks. Prabhupada ignored almost all the advice doctors gave him, but he took this doctor's order seriously. He would begin by leaving the house at 5:00 A.M. with some devotees. He used his cane but placed it in the ground rhythmically and walked briskly. He walked for an hour, timing himself to return to the temple in time to see the greeting of the Deities. He spoke philosophy on the walks. He liked it when his disciples took the side of Mayavadis or atheists. It gave him a chance to defeat the opposition. I often played the role of the nondevotee. Prabhupada would turn to me and say, "So what do they say?" and I would come out with a challenge, often some doubt that I was actually harboring. Once I challenged Prabhupada and said he didn't offer proof of transmigration. The example that as a person changes from babyhood to childhood to youth and old age, so at the time of death he changes to a new body—is not a proof but an analogy. I also said that Krsna's statement that as one changes from old clothes to new clothes, so one changes from an old body to a new body—this too is not a proof but an analogy. Prabhupada became angry and called me something like a rascal. I did not want him to think I was an atheist. Ultimately I accepted Krsna's teachings of transmigration in the Second Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*. I had been speaking like an atheist just to provide Prabhupada with some mock debate. But when I saw him take me seriously and chastise me, I abruptly stopped. That was the danger of making "arguments" with Prabhupada.

Questions and Answers

Srila Prabhupada asked for questions after his lectures, even though many of them were not intelligent or repetition of the same thing. At MIT in 1968, a person asked, “Why do you wear that white paint on your face?” Prabhupada retorted by asking the man a question: “Why do you wear your necktie?” The man sat down silently. Prabhupada went on to say that questions about dress were trivial. Prabhupada appreciated the questions of a peace worker named Bob Cohen. He later published their interview in a book titled *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*. The ideal question was asked by Maharaja Pariksit at the beginning of his inquiries to Sukadeva Gosvami. The king asked, “What is the duty of a human being, especially one who is about to die?” Sukadeva replied that a person’s duty was to chant and hear the glories of the Supreme Lord.

Visitors

Here are some guidelines for visitors to Viraha Bhavan:

- 1) It is more polite to ask if you can come at a certain time than to just say you are coming. Others may already be scheduled, or there’s a doctor’s appointment, etc.
- 2) The Hudson train station pickup has to be carefully coordinated. Our involvement is dependent on available drivers and daily schedules. A cheaper train at the wrong time may also have to include a \$20.00 taxi fare.
- 3) The pickup at the Chinese bus in Albany is not an option; even though it is the cheapest transport, there is construction in the area.

4) Ultimately all visits are dependent on my health on a particular day. It is best not to purchase a nonrefundable, non-changeable airline ticket.

Pineapple

Pineapples are plentiful in Hawaii. Hawaii was a good place for Prabhupada to go because he was able to increase his output on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* translations and purports. One time his disciples residing in Hawaii, Govinda dasi and Gaurasundara, invited Prabhupada to come to Hawaii and told him it was mango season. Prabhupada obliged, but when he got to Hawaii it was not mango season. That was a duplicitous invitation. Prabhupada wrote in a letter, “When I arrived in Hawaii it was not mango season. It was rat season,” with the rodents scurrying in the rafters of his house. In the back yard of the Hawaii ISKCON temple there is a huge banyan tree, very beautiful, like one in India. The devotees in Hawaii said that Prabhupada remarked, “Lord Siva is sitting under the banyan tree.” He took it as a very auspicious presence.

The origin of *tulasi* worship in ISKCON began in Hawaii, where Govinda dasi grew *tulasi* from seeds. The climate was so favorable that they grew many *tulasis*, and some of them were extra-large, with big trunks. Govinda dasi mailed seeds to devotees in the United States and other places, and they raised the *tulasis* from the seeds, protecting them in cold weather with Gro lights and keeping them outdoors in the summer. Prabhupada even wrote about Govinda dasi’s starting *tulasi* worship in

a purport of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Rye

Uddhava, who is visiting with us for a month, likes to put rye in the bread he makes in our bread machine. He makes pumpernickel bread, which comes from Germany. It is a dense, dark, flavorful grain. I don't know if they have rye in India or whether Prabhupada said something about it. When I was a teenager my favorite book was *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. The book is written in the voice of a seventeen-year-old named Holden Caulfield. In the course of the novel, he says what he'd really like to be is a catcher in the rye. He describes it as being a caretaker of a group of young boys and girls who are running freely in a field of growing rye. His job is to protect the children from running dangerously over the edge of the rye field. This is Holden's whimsical conception of the vocation he would like to follow.

Ratha-yatra

Bala is returning today from a three-week visit to Trinidad, where he was the main force behind organizing and performing the Ratha-yatra. He is like the Jayananda of Trinidad. He started Ratha-yatra there singlehandedly ten years ago. He has performed it every year, and it has built up to being the biggest ISKCON festival in the whole Caribbean. Now the procession goes down the main street of

the capital city, Port of Spain. Hundreds of devotees from the Caribbean and elsewhere, along with congregational members of the Trinidad temples and onlookers in the city, take part in *kirtana* and pull the ropes. The procession leads down to an area which is the neighborhood of government people, lawyers and politicians. They come out and observe the Ratha-yatra; some even pull the ropes. The festival is appreciated as a cultural event. Port of Spain is predominately populated by black people, and the population for all of Trinidad is 60% black and 40% Hindu descendants. There is some tension on the island between the two ethnic parties, but the Ratha-yatra is a peaceful event. And the people can see devotees from all over the world chanting there. It is a healing event. Of course we know that in ISKCON, Ratha-yatra began in San Francisco in 1967. Swamiji instructed the devotees to take the Deities out in a flatbed truck. In subsequent years they improved it, and, led by Jayananda, they constructed Ratha-yatra carts. The procession went through Golden Gate Park, and one year, around 1969, 10,000 people, many of them hippies, followed the parade and heard Prabhupada give a lecture.

Now Ratha-yatra is spread all over the world in ISKCON in many cities. Although San Francisco was the pioneer and early leader in Ratha-yatras, it wasn't picked up immediately on the East Coast. Around 1968 Brahmananda and the New York devotees from 26 Second Avenue carried Jagannatha Deities on palanquins and walked through Central Park, but it wasn't widely attended by the public. In Boston we also took Jagannatha Deities carried on heavy palanquins, and took

Them to the Boston Commons and finally to Cambridge Park. I remember an African-American man remarking to me that he liked the fact that Lord Jagannatha was black. I was Prabhupada's servant in 1974 when he attended the Ratha-yatra in San Francisco. It was well-attended by onlookers and devotees, and at the end of the procession Prabhupada led a *kirtana* and burst into dancing with his arms upraised, which caused his devotees to jump high in ecstasy. Riding on the cart with Prabhupada was a good position to be in. A few other *sannyasis* were on the cart with Prabhupada. We had a birds-eye view of all the participants strung out beside the cart and in front and behind it.

An Update of Our Out-loud Readings

We have finished hearing the six volumes of *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. The end of the Sixth Volume talks about Prabhupada's last days. From the devotees' viewpoint it is very sad and filled with anxiety as they try to coax Prabhupada to take some nourishment and go on living. But Prabhupada is transcendental, refusing to eat and moving toward the end of his life. At one point the GBC members gather in Vrndavana, plead with Prabhupada to use his free will and stay with them in the world. Prabhupada agrees and begins taking drink and food. The devotees become light-hearted again, and Prabhupada resumes his dictation. Prabhupada has given the devotees a prayer to say: "My dear Lord Krsna, if You desire, please cure Srila Prabhupada." Despite his change of attitude, his health worsens and Krsna seems to

want him back in the spiritual world. He finally disappears on November 14, 1977 at 7:30 P.M. The devotees weep and lament but eventually find strength in service in separation, which Prabhupada has always said is superior to personal association.

Now we are reading the Seventh Volume, *Additional Pastimes*. This is not as deep or tearful as the end of his life, but it recounts early years and is more happy, lighthearted reading. It tells of his returning from India to San Francisco in 1968, his visiting the new temple in Los Angeles, and now we are reading “A Visit to Boston,” which was in May 1968 and was drawn from a diary I kept during his month-long stay. Prabhupada lectured in the major universities and was pleased by those engagements. There were only three devotees living in the Boston storefront temple: myself, Pradyumna and Jadurani devi dasi. All Jadurani wanted to do was paint, and she resented other duties. Pradyumna was given Sanskrit studies by Prabhupada, and he did not much respond to the temple president’s request that he do other chores. Visitors from other temples came to Boston during Prabhupada’s stay, so we had enough manpower to supply his needs. During his 1968 visit to Boston, Prabhupada introduced giving *brahmana* initiation. At first he said it was only for the men, but when the two women, Govinda dasi and Jadurani, became upset and disappointed, Prabhupada noticed their mood and changed his decision. He allowed the women to receive brahminical initiation, but they did not get the sacred threads. During his stay in Boston devotees from New York came up, and they also received brahminical initiation. It was during this time in Boston that Swamiji accepted the name “Prabhupada.”

Random Looks at the Index to *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*

acintya

acintya defined, p. 424

“The word *acintya* (‘inconceivable’) is very significant in this connection. God's energy is beyond our conception, beyond our thinking jurisdiction, and is therefore called inconceivable. Who can argue this point? He pervades this material world and yet is beyond it. We cannot comprehend even this material world, which is insignificant compared to the spiritual world—so how can we comprehend what is beyond? *Acintya* means that which is beyond this material world, that which our argument, logic and philosophical speculation cannot touch, that which is inconceivable.”

“Krsnas tu bhagavan svayam”

This *sloka* appears in the First Canto at the end of a string of verses identifying the incarnations. Krsna is also mentioned on schedule. But in this text Vyasa says,

“All of the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Sri Krsna is the original Personality of Godhead. All of them

appear on planets whenever there is a disturbance created by the atheists. The Lord incarnates to protect the theists.” (*S B* 1.3.28)

Some devotees say this is the most important verse in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* because it distinguishes Krsna from all the other Visnu *avataras* and establishes Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When I first read this verse, I was impressed with the heaviness of the conclusion. I was pleased and relieved to find such a conclusive proof about Krsna being the cause of all causes and the origin of all the *avataras*. This verse defeats the notion that Krsna is an *avatara* of Visnu. The proper understanding (as described in this verse) is that Visnu is an expansion of Krsna. The *Brahma-samhita* states that Krsna is *sarva-karana-karanam*, the cause of all causes. (*BS* 5.1) In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* it is stated that before anything existed, Krsna was there, and when everything is annihilated, Krsna will exist. This is revealed in the four “nutshell” verses of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. (*SB* 2.9.33-36) But *krsnas tu bhagavan svayam* is the “emperor verse” revealing Krsna as the origin of all the other expansions. It didn’t take long to understand that *sastra* was itself the ultimate conclusion. Above all speculation, we have to turn to *sastra* for knowledge of the absolute truth. Here it is in *krsnas tu bhagavan svayam*, and Prabhupada pointed it out to us aside from writing it in his purport. Thus we became fixed in essential knowledge of Krsna.

Flowers

Flowers are an important part of Vedic practice. The *arca-vigrahas* are offered fresh flower garlands, and so is the spiritual master. During *guru-puja*, the disciples come up to the spiritual master and place a flower at his feet. As the singing of the *bhajana* goes on, the spiritual master usually gathers up all the flowers that have been offered to him and throws them out to the chanting and dancing devotees. A flower is offered as one of the items in *arati*. Prabhupada didn't like flowers that had no fragrance. On festival days flowers are used to decorate the temple with many garlands. In Deity worship, the *pujari* takes a garland from the Deity and offers it to a devotee or congregational member. He or she then immediately (even before smelling it) presses it to the eyes. This is mentioned in *The Nectar of Devotion*. The demigods ride in flower airplanes, and they shower down flowers onto the earth when some auspicious victory takes place by Krsna or His expansions. This is also done for any amazing feat by the pure devotees. Ladies on the rooftops shower flowers and flower petals down upon Krsna when He passes by. Prabhupada was honored by devotees making a pathway of flowers or flower petals for him when he entered their temple. In the spiritual world the *sakhis* make flower beds for Radha and Krsna. They are cooling and refreshing against the summer heat. Once Radharani was burning in separation from Krsna. Her devotees made her a fresh flower bed, but when She lay down on it, it immediately dried up. The *gopas* wore wildflowers in their turbans, and Krsna placed flowers in Radharani's hair. It is

described that Mother Yasoda, while churning butter or chasing after her mischievous child, would have the flowers falling from her hair. The *gopis* would pick flowers and put them in a basket. But sometimes Krsna and His cowherd boyfriends would interrupt them and forbid them from picking the flowers, saying that the flower garden belonged to Krsna. This would ignite an argument between the *sakhis* and *gopas* as to who was the actual proprietor of the Vrndavana garden. An important feature of the Vrndavana atmosphere is the aroma of the lotus flowers and other fragrant flowers, carried on the breezes and pleasing to all living creatures. The trees in Goloka Vrndavana bend down and make their obeisances to Krsna and offer Him their fruits and flowers.

Trees

In His *Siksastakam*, Caitanya Mahaprabhu states that one should be as tolerant as a tree. Prabhupada goes on to say a tree offers shade in the summer and it doesn't complain if it is cut. In an apparent contradiction to these noble attributes given to trees, trees are often cursed beings who have been forced to take such bodies and endure the rain and cold. Sometimes Krsna touches a cursed tree and a demigod comes out of it, is liberated and offers prayers to Krsna. Narada cursed two sons of Kuvera, Manigriva and Nalakuvara, who were naked and drunk before Narada. Narada cursed them to become trees. They were acting as less than human beings, so they were punished to enter an almost-unconscious body and suffer by

not being able to move and tolerate the harsh extremes of weather. But when Narada cursed the sons of Kuvera to become trees, he had it in mind that they would eventually get the *darsana* of Krsna and be restored to their heavenly bodies. When the Pracetas emerged from the lake where they had been performing prolonged austerities, they saw that the earth had been completely covered by trees. They did not like this, so they began burning down the trees. But they were cautioned by higher authority not to burn down all the trees. Prabhupada declared that trees that did not produce fruits or flowers are useless. Useful trees include sandalwood trees, neem trees, eucalyptus trees, and *arani* trees, which are used to automatically start fires in Vedic sacrifices. The bamboo trees are proud because Krsna's flutes are made from their branches. The *gopis* envied those trees because Krsna used to press His mouth against the flute, and the *gopis* were jealous, thinking that Krsna's lips were meant only for kissing them.

To New Mexico (from *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* Volume 7, *Prabhupada-lila: Additional Pastimes*)

In the summer of 1972 Prabhupada spent months in Montreal. Then he planned to go to a new center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and then on to Los Angeles. For some reason, the devotees in Montreal had no one to accompany Prabhupada as a traveling companion. Either they had no money or no competent man, but it was poor management. They asked him to travel alone. His plane stopped in Chicago,

and he had to take a connecting flight to New Mexico. In Chicago, as he hurried to catch his plane to New Mexico, Prabhupada tripped and fell to the ground. His carry-on luggage slipped out of his hand. A passerby stopped and helped Prabhupada to his feet and recovered his handbag (*ajnata-sukrti*). Prabhupada wasn't much hurt, but he developed a bruise on his hand. When he arrived in Santa Fe, Govinda dasi and a few local devotees and guests greeted him. Govinda dasi surprised Prabhupada by telling him that he shouldn't stay in Santa Fe but should go on to L.A. They didn't have proper accommodations, and the altitude was too high and would be bad for his health. *Then why have you asked me to come?* Prabhupada asked. Govinda dasi burst out crying: "Prabhupada! You know Krsna! What does He want us to do?" "No!", Prabhupada replied. "Krsna wants to know what *you* want to do." The other devotees relented and said that Prabhupada should at least stay overnight. They got into several cars and drove to ISKCON Santa Fe. The center was a small storefront with separate quarters for Srila Prabhupada. Somehow they didn't have a low table for him to sit behind, and they didn't set up his Dictaphone for him. Prabhupada took rest for several hours but got up at 1:00 A.M. Using his suitcase as a desk, he put his books upon it. He used paper and pen and began writing the translations and purports to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. His servant lying down in the next room heard the scratching of the pen on top of the suitcase for hours during the night. Finally Srila Prabhupada stopped his literary labors and began chanting audibly. Prabhupada went on a walk, gave a lecture and then left, after an odd one-day visit to New Mexico.

Prabhupada in Atlanta

In 1975, as part of a world tour, Prabhupada visited Caracas, Venezuela, Miami and Atlanta. In each center, Gaura-Nitai were the presiding Deities, and Prabhupada was moved to see Them. In Atlanta Prabhupada gave an arrival address, but after a few moments of glorifying the mercy of Gaura-Nitai, his voice choked, tears flowed from his eyes and he had to end his talk, overwhelmed with ecstasy. Many devotees gathered in Atlanta to be with Srila Prabhupada. Tamal Krishna Goswami brought 40 devotees from his bus party, the Library Party was there, and Tripurari's party. Tamala Krsna Maharaja arranged for each of the devotees on the bus party to be introduced to Prabhupada. Uddhava (who is ending his one-month visit to Viraha Bhavan today) told us about his exchange with Srila Prabhupada. TKG introduced him as Bhakta Dave and said he used to be a Buddhist. Prabhupada asked him what made him join Krsna consciousness? Dave (later Uddhava) answered that in Buddhism there was no goal, but in Krsna consciousness there was a goal. Prabhupada liked this and said, "Very good." Then he said, "From no hope, now you have hope." Uddhava was in bliss and felt very fortunate to be with Prabhupada and the devotees in Atlanta for the short visit. They had enthusiastic *kirtanas*.

Prabhupada came down one time and sang “Parama Karuna” accompanied by the harmonium. Then he wanted the devotees to sing it with him. He coached them, but only a few could follow. Then Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati’s Appearance Day occurred. Prabhupada wanted the “Parama Karuna” singing to be accompanied by a *mridanga*. Two *mridangas* were brought forth; they were both dead. Then a visiting boy volunteered his own *mridanga*, which was good-sounding. Prabhupada played back the tape of his singing “Parama Karuna” with him playing the harmonium, and then he played the *mridanga* on top of it and had a recording made. This was all unusual and blissful for the devotees.

In celebrating the appearance day of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, the devotees arranged the paraphernalia for an *arati*. They hesitated as to who should perform the *arati*, but they secretly wanted Prabhupada to do it. He wanted to do it also, so he finally stepped forward and performed the *arati* while devotees sang. Everyone agreed that the short visit to Atlanta was outstanding, with many special events jammed in within a few days. It was memorable.

A Random Look at the Index of the *Krsna Book*

attraction

Krsna all-attractive, pp. 126, 128

“My dear Lord Krsna, Your very name suggests that You are

all-attractive. The attraction of the sun and the moon are due to You. By the attraction of the sun, You are beautifying the very existence of the Yadu dynasty. With the attraction of the moon, You are enhancing the potency of the land, the demigods, the *brahmanas*, the cows and the oceans. Because of Your supreme attraction, demons like Kamsa and others are annihilated.” (*Krsna Book*, Chapter 14)

“Whatever is attractive within the cosmic manifestation is due to Krsna. Krsna is therefore the reservoir of all pleasure.” (*SB* 10.14.56)

These are from the prayers offered by Lord Brahma to Lord Krsna after Krsna humiliated Brahma when he stole the calves and cowherd boys of Krsna. Now Brahma has come to his senses, and he praises Krsna in a wonderful series of verses (although they were not very impressive to Krsna because of Brahma’s behavior). But Krsna is all-attractive. That is the meaning of His name “Krs-na.” Everyone is attracted to Krsna, even those who are attracted to His aspects in the material illusory energy. But the pure devotees are attracted only to the spiritual form of Krsna. They are attracted to His name, fame, qualities and form. Brahma concludes his prayers, “As long as there is sunshine within this material world, kindly accept my humble obeisances.” Lord Brahma, the master of the universe, has been defeated

and humiliated by Krsna, who appears as a five-year-old cowherd child. Krsna's appearing so young and mixing with other young cowherd boys was the cause of Brahma's bewilderment. He thought, "How could God be so humanlike?" and he fell into the *maya* of thinking he was greater than Krsna. But finally, after Krsna's revelation to him, Brahma has a mature understanding of Krsna's power and attractive features. Brahma, as the supreme living being in the universe and the original all-intelligent *kavi*, was nevertheless "smoked" by the five-year-old boy who he could not recognize as his supreme worshipable Lord and the controller of the whole cosmos, Brahma included.

bliss

via chanting and hearing, p. 672

“Demigods and persons advanced in spiritual knowledge always hear and chant about Your transcendental pastimes because this process has the specific potency of nullifying the accumulated results of sinful life. Intelligent persons factually dip into the ocean of Your nectarean activities and patiently hear about them. They are immediately freed from the contamination of the material qualities; they do not have to undergo severe penances and austerities for advancement in spiritual life. The chanting and hearing of Your transcendental pastimes is the easiest process for

self-realization. Simply by submissive aural reception of the transcendental message, one's heart is cleansed of all dirty things. Thus Krsna consciousness becomes fixed in the heart of a devotee."

This passage appears in the chapter "Prayers by the Personified Vedas." They intelligently point out that the simple process of chanting and hearing about Krsna is the prime method for cleaning the heart and developing pure love of God. In the nine principles of devotional service, *sravanam kirtanam* (chanting and hearing about Visnu) are the first items of importance. This pleasant and sublime method can be taken up by all persons individually or in groups. It doesn't require any special qualifications or hard austerities. All that is required is a submissive hearing about Krsna from authoritative sources. Reading the *Krsna Book* is an excellent way to dive into the ocean of Krsna's activities and patiently hear about them.

Yasoda

enjoyed Krsna's babyhood, p. 72

"As soon as [baby Krsna and Balarama] would come crawling to Their mothers, Yasoda and Rohini would take Them on their

laps and, covering Them with the lower portion of their *saris*, allow Them to suck their breasts. When the babies were sucking their breasts, the mothers could see small teeth coming in. Thus their joy would be intensified to see their children growing. Sometimes the naughty babies would crawl up to the cowshed, catch the tail of a calf and stand up. The calves, being disturbed, would immediately begin running here and there, and the children would be dragged over clay and cow dung. To see this fun, Yasoda and Rohini would call all their neighborhood friends, the *gopis*. Upon seeing these childhood pastimes of Lord Krsna, the *gopis* would be merged in transcendental bliss. In their enjoyment they would laugh very loudly.” (*Krsna Book*, Chapter 5)

Srila Prabhupada has written very impressively in his purports to the Tenth Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* about the glory of Mother Yasoda. He says she is the best of devotees. No one shared so much intimacy with Krsna in His childhood as Mother Yasoda. She would be with the child all the time. She did not see Him as God but as her dearest son, but in this way she realized transcendental bliss. She was always in anxiety that Krsna not fall into any difficulty or danger. She loved Him more than her own life's breath. His childhood pastimes as enjoyed and shared with Mother Yasoda were not tasted by any other devotee to the extent that Mother Yasoda tasted them. Her whole life was Krsna.