

## ***Free Write Journal #4***

**August 26, 2018**

This is the fourth week of keeping the Journal. I have been writing about dying, illness and health. I am not preoccupied by these. I am inspired to write. But my doctor, Nitai-Gaurasundara, advised me not to neglect the physical exercises; they are very important. So I am committed again to doing them. Saci came over and coached me through my routine, plus he added a few of his own.

We are celebrating Janmastami at the VFW Hall. We are expecting only moderate attendance. I am going to read sections from the Tenth Canto, which Prabhupada began composing in January 1977. The purports contain quotations from the *Krsna Book* published in early 1970, but the 1977 edition also contains confidential knowledge. I am especially eager to share the revelation of Visvanatha Cakravarti, "based on the authority of many scriptures, including the Harivamsa," that Krsna was simultaneously born to both Devaki and Yasoda. To Devaki and Vasudeva He first appeared as Lord Visnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and they knew Him as such. To Yasoda He did not appear as God but as their beloved son. Yasoda and Nanda Maharaja are considered greater than Devaki and Vasudeva in

their spontaneous love for Krsna, even though they never recognized Him as the Godhead. This knowledge (that Krsna is actually born to Yasoda) is a little esoteric, but it is printed many times in Prabhupada's book so I don't hesitate to read it on Janmastami. I am breaking my fast at 1:00 P.M. because I get headaches if I try to fast until midnight. We are serving a feast at 1:00 P.M. for those who choose to join me. Others can wait until midnight. I don't feel guilty; I am living within my limits. On Prabhupada's appearance day, I will read homages from the *Tributes* book at a gathering in Krishna Kumari's house. (On Janmastami 1966, Swamiji asked all his disciples--about a dozen--to stay in the storefront all day and chant on our beads until the First Initiation at night. Swamiji came down to read to us from his unpublished manuscript of *Bhagavad-gita* for an hour. Then he left us alone. He told us that devotees in India fasted until midnight on Janmastami, but if we became hungry we could take fruit from his refrigerator. All of us found it hard to stay in the storefront all day. We had only begun the practice of *japa*, and it was a labor to keep up chanting for hours with little attraction for the holy name. There were no chairs in the storefront, and it was uncomfortable sitting on the floor or leaning against the wall or pacing. A few devotees lay down on the floor. In the afternoon, Janaki said she had to go home to take care of her cats. The other devotees

argued with her; Swamiji had told us to stay in the storefront. But she insisted, and left. In the evening, when the devotees began preparing for the initiation, I ducked out and returned to my apartment because I wasn't ready for the surrender of initiation.)

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### **August 27, 2018**

The Catholic Church is rocked again and again with exposures of sexual abuse by priests against young boys. Pope Francis said it is "atrocious," but people aren't satisfied with his words. They want to see the Church allow priests to marry and permit women to enter the ministry as priests. It will never happen. The celibacy requirement for priests is thousands of years old. The Protestant standard of allowing a minister to take a wife seems sensible in the light of the widespread abuse of Catholic priests. In ISKCON, the renounced order (*sannyasa*) has a checkered career. But the abuse has not been as widespread or perverted as the Catholic Church. No one is suggesting that the *sannyasis* in good standing should get married. Women are suppressed in ISKCON. The GBC passed a resolution that women could become initiating gurus, but so far whenever a woman's name is submitted for guruship, she is rejected by the Governing

Body. Their resolution that women can qualify as gurus is becoming a farce.

The members of ISKCON are not beggars or aggressive salespersons of books. There is a deeper mission to their activities. As stated in Prabhupada's purports, the devotees are engaged in the highest welfare work. By chanting Hare Krsna in public, by distributing transcendental literature, they are elevating people above their karmic reactions and giving them a chance to escape the cycle of birth and death. They are engaging fallen souls in devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which is the highest goal. Krsna states in the *Bhagavad-gita* that there is no one dearer to Him than those who spread His message of Godhead. No wonder the preachers are blissful and committed to their service.

I am about to begin my morning physical exercise. People who are important to me have advised me not to neglect it. I pedal my stationary bike for seven minutes. I sit on an upright chair and do ten reps of stand-up and sit-down. I push my four-wheeler for laps in the larger room and do a few other things. I become sweaty and tired out; I take sips of water. This morning Baladeva accompanied me on my routine. After one set of reps, he would ask me, "Shweating?" I say yes, and he applies a moist hand-towel to my face, eyes and head, relieving me of my perspiration. Nitai-

Gaurasundara said I could do only one workout a day, since time is short and I am so keen to do writing.

The Singh family is gone and it's "just the four of us"--me, Baladeva, Bala and Krsna-dasi--until the end of the week, when more visitors arrive. It is nice being quiet with our small family. At lunch, I am going to say to Krsna-dasi, "My main *bhajana* is *darsana*, and Krsna has sent me a world-class *pujari* to take care of Radha-Govinda. I am very fortunate." Krsna-dasi is completely into the mindset of being a *pujari*. On my request, she cleans and changes the dress of Radha-Govinda every three days. We have many outfits, but I want to show pictures of Them in new outfits every three days on our website. We have some money saved in an envelope for "Deities," and I want to order some new outfits from Tappan.

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I finally obtained a copy of the *Tributes* book, 2018 (homages to Prabhupada by his disciples). But I am not reading it yet; instead I am writing. I received two new cartridge Sheaffer pens, and so far they are working. What do I have to write that is more important than reading the *Tributes* book? (I will save it for later and relish it, but right now I want to

get in some licks at free writing. I have less than an hour, then I have to take my pills and go to bed.) [The expensive Sheaffer pen started skipping, but I am hanging in there with a cheap pen.] On the cover of the *Tributes* book, Prabhupada is sitting in an airport with a sober look and a thick, luxuriant garland draped around him. No one else is visible in the photograph, but for sure dozens of devotees are facing him in adoration. I am adoring him too. My homage describes my private worship of my Prabhupada *murti*. Jayapataka Maharaja's homage is much more expansive: he's looking forward to the completion of the Vedic Planetarium in Mayapura; desiring to see the unification of the Caitanya disciplic succession, the exponential increase of the distribution of Prabhupada's books, and many other of Prabhupada's desires fulfilled. "Following them is possible only by your grace." Jayadvaita Swami meditates on Prabhupada in the wee hours of the morning. His day is only beginning, dictating *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. "*Bhagavatam* in the morning, business in the afternoon. Fortunate generations to come would heed his call." This is my first peek into the *Tributes* book. I've got four minutes left, no, Baladeva has already come up with the Deities' offering.

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## **August 28, 2018**

I have finished reading the *Tributes* book, and have selected the homages I will read at a gathering of devotees. The devotees writing in the *Tributes* book are not sentimentalists or fanatics. They write from the heart, expressing their deep gratitude and love for Srila Prabhupada, and they give evidence from *sastra* how Prabhupada is a *maha-bhagavata*. His legacy will last for ten thousand years, long after his initiated disciples have disappeared. New generations of disciples are joining Prabhupada's ISKCON by the hundreds, in countries like Russia, Ukraine, China, India and many other countries. Kesava Bharati Maharaja advocates reading Prabhupada's books out loud with other devotees and completing the entire *Bhagavatam* in a year by reading 40 pages a day. Hrdayananda dasa Goswami describes the period of 1966-1970 as a golden era in ISKCON, "when all the devotees knew Prabhupada, and he knew them." He wants to revitalize the preaching to make it more attractive to Westerners and create a strong, dynamic "ISKCON West." All the homage writers expressed the importance of loving exchanges with followers of Prabhupada. It is a wonderful book, and I am eager to share it with others.

I now have an extra writing session in the afternoon, but right now I don't know what to say. I could copy more what I read of the homages, but I would just be paraphrasing what others have expressed. I am a person of solitude. We had two guests for lunch, but I didn't know them and I didn't speak. Baladeva asked each of them about their lives, and they opened up and conversed freely. Later he told me, "It's easy, just ask them about their lives." He did it very well, and I had nothing enlightening to add. Bala and Krsna-dasi were also silent. I like it when it's just the four of us or someone I know and am friendly with. When Dhanurdhara Swami is staying in his apartment across the street, he sometimes comes over and begs a lunch. I don't have to say anything. He provides the entertainment by talking all about his active preaching. He once told me he had "the gift of gab." By contrast, I am an introvert. (Years ago I read a book, *The Introvert Advantage*. The author said the world is two-thirds extroverts but assured there was nothing wrong in being an introvert. The "exes" charge their batteries by outside contact, whereas the "innies" prefer to stay at home and read a good book--or write.)

Gunagrahi Maharaja has advanced cancer. He wrote an homage this year, but he's weaker now and staying in the hospice facility in Vrndavana. He may not be present to write an homage next year. They say he is in good

spirits. Some of the contributors to the *Tributes* book wrote that they were at the same age as Prabhupada when he first came to America; that means 70 years old. Others alluded to the fact that they were aging or older.

Damodara dasa wrote a poem with memories of being a disciple in 1966. But he ended his poem, "I'm at your feet, and I am still young." At seventy-eight-and-a-half years, I may be one of Prabhupada's oldest disciples, but after reading Damodara's poem, I thought, "Yes, I am still young too."

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### **August 29, 2018**

I have a few minutes before I take my shower. I want to meet with Bala and Krsna-dasi and talk about *pujari* services. I will say Krsna-dasi is the superior *pujari*, especially in making turbans. While she was away in Trinidad for a month, Bala did the Deity dressing every three days. His turbans weren't up to par, but he added something special. Every time he dressed Radha, he fitted Her blouse so that Her breasts appeared more prominent. I asked Baladeva if he noticed, and he said, "Yes!" We liked how She looked and thought Govinda was pleased. (In the Gosvamis' literature it is described that when Krsna was lifting Govardhana Hill, He noticed Radharani among the Vrajavasis. He glanced at Her breasts and His finger

trembled, causing the mountain to slide. So He had to adjust His vision.) There are many references to Krsna being attracted to Radharani's breasts. So I want to ask Krsna-dasi to learn how to fit Radha's blouse so she can do it as her husband did. Maybe she places too many heavy necklaces on Radharani's chest, or maybe Bala can reveal the secret of his dressing--if he's even aware of it. (Krsna-dasi is back, but this morning Bala fitted Radharani in Her blouse. It did not have the same effect as when he did it while Krsna-dasi was away. The Deities are real persons. Sometimes They look chubby, and sometimes They look thin. Sometimes Their faces are full and sometimes they are angular. Sometimes They even look more happy than at other times. So I accept that Radharani was engaging us in a pastime when She appeared that way while Bala was dressing her while Krsna-dasi was away. That period seems to have passed. I don't want to go to any extraordinary measures to try to bring Her appearance back the way it was. She looks just fine as She is.)

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After a week of Indian cooking by Matsya devi-dasi, Bala is going to make veggie burgers today. It's just the four of us, so we don't have to worry

about accomodating others' tastes. It is an all-American meal. He home-makes the burgers out of vegetarian ingredients. He adds a layer of sprouts, a slice of fresh tomato (from our garden), a slice of cheese, and it's sandwiched top and bottom with thin bread. Separately he prepares fresh hot French fries, which are served with a home-made recipe for catsup. The meal is first offered to all the Deities in our *ashram* on separate plates, and then the devotees honor it "to their full satisfaction." *Sarira abidya-jal--* "But Krsna is very kind to us. He has given us this nice *prasadam* just to control the tongue."

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Come to a free write. Whatever comes into your head. But steer it towards Krsna consciousness. (In the summer, about 20 devotees gathered at the Boston Commons and began chanting Hare Krsna. Onlookers gathered. The *kirtana* lasted for hours. Around 1:00 devotees arrived from the temple with pots of *prasadam* for the *sankirtana* party. It was usually *kichari* and *chapatis*. The devotees sat on the ground and honored *prasadam*. Then we went back to singing, dancing and distributing books. We went out every day in good weather. I was blissful, although there were some hecklers in the crowd. Prabhupada was pleased with our *harinama*

activity. In the winter we didn't go out; we stayed in the temple and invited guests to join us for *prasadam*, *kirtana*, a lecture and dramatic skits. This was a golden era for Boston, with sixty devotees living in the temple including workers for ISKCON Press. At this time (circa 1969-71) we had purchased a large mansion, which was in the past a showcase for people interested in buying coffins. The devotees were mostly young *grhasthas*. Their "private" quarters were half of a large room, shared with another couple and divided with a big *madrass* cloth--no separating wall.

Prabhupada visited Boston several times. The first time we had only a small storefront, but he stayed for an entire month (May 1968). He lectured in the prestigious Boston colleges, Harvard, M.I.T., Northeastern, Boston University, Boston College, Brandeis, etc. At Brandeis the devotees attracted a young man named Glenn Teton. He joined the temple and was later initiated by Prabhupada as Giriraja dasa brahmachary (now still serving as Giriraja Swami). Prabhupada made a couple of other visits lasting about two weeks. But when he first visited our mansion, it was so snowy and icy that he gave only one lecture in the temple. We had rented him a cozy house in Needham, Massachusetts, a half-hour away from the temple. When Prabhupada was being driven to his house, he looked out the car window at the snow-filled fields and said, "This is Krsna's picture." It

was so icy he couldn't even go out for his morning walk. After two days he returned to Los Angeles. He visited our temple another year, in the summer heat, and installed Radha-Krsna Deities. (Those Deities are still being worshiped as Radha-Gopivallabha in the ISKCON temple on Commonwealth Avenue.) When he installed the Deities and They were placed on the altar, he came back into the room and bowed down before Them. I was beside him and we were both on our knees. He asked me, "What do the devotees think of Radha-Krsna?" I replied, "Oh, they love Them, Prabhupada!" During that visit, he held a large initiation for twenty devotees from the Boston temple. How sweet it was to have Prabhupada in our midst! His next stop was the Brooklyn temple. A number of ISKCON leaders were staying at our temple during Prabhupada's visit, and they booked tickets to fly with him to New York. My wife got me aside and said, "It's very rare that you get Prabhupada's association. Why don't you fly with him to New York?" But I thought it was my duty to stay in Boston and take care of the twenty new initiates. I would serve him in separation.

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## August 30, 2018

We are expecting guests.

In a couple of days Jayadvaita Swami will arrive, and Saunaka Rsi (Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies), and Rama Raya (leader of the *harinama* party in New York City). Unfortunately we don't have sufficient space to accomodate all of them. Bala answered the phone and told Jayadvaita Swami that he could stay at their house, and he and his wife could move out. But I heard Krsna-dasi lament, "I have just settled in." I don't like the policy of moving them out of their house and giving it to guests. So I assured them they could stay in their house. This means we will have to offer austere space to some guests in the ashram. We will offer Jayadvaita Swami a private room with a connecting bathroom. We will ask Saunaka Rsi and Rama Raya to stay together in "the manger." It is comfortable, but it has no bathroom. They will have to enter the house to use the bathroom. I will have to apologize to Saunaka Rsi because I know he is usually offered private quarters wherever he goes. I expect to have long conversations with each of the guests. I had prepared a long reading of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* Tenth Canto on Krsna's appearance day. But I want my prestigious guests to speak, so I will cut down my reading to purport excerpts on one topic: the evidence from Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

and many *sastras* that Yasoda is the actual mother of Krsna, born simultaneously as Lord Visnu in Mathura. Krsna is the beloved son of Yasoda and Nanda Maharaja in Gokula. I hope my guests will accept this and speak on Janmastami. It will be a little awkward when I and the general audience honor *prasadam* at 1:00 P.M. and the three senior devotees go on fasting, but I hope they will accept my headache-handicap. It *will* be awkward, but I am proclaiming my limits. I will wear my *sannyasa* dress on Janmastami, but otherwise I wear saffron cotton pants, a saffron top, and Nike sneakers to support my crippled foot. I am following the ethos of Hridayananda dasa Goswami's ISKCON West regarding dress.