

## ***Free Write Journal #42***

### **Free Writes**

#### **Chanting Out Loud**

In Sacinandana Swami's new book, *The Living Name*, he recommends chanting *japa* out loud so that you can hear the Names. This is the standard teaching that Prabhupada gave. For months, I have been chanting silently in my mind, fearing that out-loud chanting would prevent a headache. I know of some of the serious Godbrothers who chant silently because of health issues. But after reading Sacinandana Swami's recommendations, I felt guilty. So today I started whispering loud enough to hear. I was very pleased with the difference, and I intend to keep it up.

#### **Chanting the Names Off the Beads**

Prabhupada used to say we should chant sixteen rounds on the beads and chant the holy names "innumerably" off the beads. I know a few devotees who attempt this. When they are not chanting their quota, they chant in their minds.

Some of them count the extra mantras on a clicker. Some of them even chant out loud in between other talking. I have attempted this to some degree. I think it is a good practice. I will try to increase it and keep it up.

### **Chanting with a Positive Attitude**

Sacinandana Swami's new book is very positive. It is not self-deprecating. He promises great transformations if one follows the suggestions he makes. Here are a few quotes from his valuable book:

“Summary of yojana: We must give our best energy and effort to align body, mind and heart, in succession. First we enter the gate of the body, then the gate of the mind, and finally, the gate of the heart. With our body we sit straight and relax our muscles. With our mind we concentrate fully on the mantra, bringing the mind back wherever it wanders. And with our heart we address Radha and Krsna, infusing devotional feelings into our chanting. Then we wait . . . humbly and patiently, but with eagerness for Radha and Krsna to reveal Themselves. It takes consistent practice! With time, the results are extraordinary . . .” (p.49)

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“As I give my seminars and retreats around the world, I have noticed an intriguing phenomenon: sometimes devotees doubt they can have direct relationship with Krsna. I believe this is for two reasons. Firstly, devotees feel they can only have a relationship with the tangible representative of Krsna: the guru. And secondly, they misconstrue Prabhupada’s warnings of the *prakṛta-sahajiyā* mood—an attitude characterized by cheap imitations and unfounded imaginations. In our tradition we greatly stress the necessity of the guru and hear a great deal about developing our relationship with him. Indeed, the guru is of paramount importance. But he is also described to be a transparent medium. He leads us to Krsna, the highest Truth. That means that our devotion does not stop at the guru’s door. His door is made of glass, and we look through it to find Krsna on the altar.” (p. 62-63)

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“My comment: This means that after we hear from a *sadhu* about how we are connected to Krsna, we should feel some excitement in our heart and express ourselves to Krsna: ‘I have forgotten You for so many long

years.’ Krsna will be delighted! He will say, ‘I am so happy you have said this. I tried to tell you through the *sadhus* and *sastras* . . . *I also sent you reminders through My material nature, that you should turn to Me. But you are not listening. Now, finally, you have heard Me. . . . Wonderful!*”  
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“Yes. It will be true! It is because you moved into a relationship with Krsna, or at least you tried, and Krsna immediately responded by coming to your aid. The scriptures tell us that Krsna will personally cut the knot of false ego and make us strong from inside. You can’t give up material desires by your own endeavor. But Krsna can give you the required strength.” (p. 70)

### **Random Looks at the *Bhagavatam* Slokas**

**“As the Supreme Personality of Godhead, You have taken birth from my abdomen. O my Lord, how is that possible for the Supreme One, who has in His belly all the cosmic manifestation? The answer is that it is possible, for at the end of the millennium You lie down on a leaf of a banyan tree, and just like a small baby,**

**you lick the toe of Your lotus foot.” (S.B. 3.33.4)**

This is from the prayers of Devahuti to her son Kapiladeva. She is at first astonished that the Supreme Lord has taken birth from her abdomen, but then she says it is possible. She gives the example that the end of the millennium Krsna lies down on the leaf of a *banyan* tree in the form of a small baby and sucks the toe of His lotus foot. In his purport Prabhupada says the Lord licks His toe to taste the nectar for which the devotees always aspire. Sometimes the Lord Himself wonders how much transcendental pleasure is within Himself, and in order to taste His own potency, He sometimes takes the position of tasting Himself. “Lord Caitanya is Krsna Himself, but He appears as a devotee to taste the sweetness of the transcendental mellow in Himself, which is tasted by Srimati Radharani, the greatest of all devotees.”

Some of my disciples feel a loyalty and love for me over many years. This is similar to the way I relate to Srila Prabhupada and the way he felt about his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. It is not merely a matter of duty to the guru but a relationship of spontaneous love. The devotees feel a taste in this love, and it is my duty to keep it alive. My duty is also not to keep my disciples’ love for myself, but to pass it on to their love for Srila Prabhupada. I share with them what I feel for Srila Prabhupada and hope to inspire them in their direct relationship with the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON, who lives forever in his *vani*.

**“The sages continued, ‘O great hero, for this reason you should not**

**be the cause of spoiling the spiritual life of the general populace. If their spiritual life is spoiled because of your activities, you will certainly fall down from your opulent and royal position.”** (S.B. 4.14.16)

King Vena was a most cruel and unqualified monarch. Even as a child he used to kill his young playmates. As a ruler, he stopped all religious sacrifices and allowed the government to deteriorate into an assembly of thieves and rogues. This verse was spoken by the sages to King Vena after he had transgressed practically all the responsibilities for a strong and pious ruler. They concealed their real anger and pacified him with sweet words. They told him that he should set the example by living a religious life, and by doing so he would rid himself of the contamination of the material modes of nature, and the general public would also become gradually elevated to the kingdom of God and go home, back to Godhead. They told the king that if he protected the citizens from the disturbances of mischievous ministers as well as the thieves and rogues, he could accept taxes given by his subjects. “Thus a pious king can certainly enjoy himself in this world as well as in the life after death.” But King Vena was such a demon that he exploded in anger at this advice from the sages and told them that *he* was God, and they should worship him only. The sages then had no alternative but to curse King Vena and cause his death by their powerful words. Nowadays, the rulers of the world-states are often like little King Venas, but there are no powerful, pious sages who can approach one with good advice and if

necessary, dethrone him by their powerful words alone. King Vena was checked by the qualified saintly persons in days of yore, but Kali-yuga has progressed so that a mischievous mis-ruler cannot be dragged down, and he misuses the power of his office and the military to keep in power and not give protection to the citizens.

**“The supreme time factor, which represents the Supreme Person, was previously in our favor and not in favor of the demigods, but now that same time factor is against us.”** (S.B. 8.21.21)

This verse was spoken by Bali Maharaja to the armies of the demons, whom he was in charge of. There is always a constant battle between the demons and the demigods. As Bali Maharaja says, previously the time factor was in the demons’ favor, but now that same time factor (which represents the Supreme Person) is against the demons. He tells them no one can supersede the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and so they should please stop immediately in their efforts to fight the demigods because time is not in their favor. They must wait for that favorable time when their defeating the demigods will be possible. The demons then entered the lower regions of the universe, to which they were driven by the soldiers of Visnu. Then Garuda, King of the birds, understanding the desire of his master, arrested Bali Maharaja with the ropes of Varuna. Now Bali Maharaja had lost everything, but he remained fixed in his determination to satisfy Vamanadeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vamanadeva said to Bali Maharaja that he had promised to

give Him three steps of land, but Vamanadeva had occupied the entire universe with two steps: “Now think about where I should put My third.” The Lord said to Bali Maharaja that since he had been unable to give charity according to his promise, he should now go and live in the hellish planets. Bali Maharaja said to Vamanadeva that he would rectify matters to make his promise truthful: “Please therefore place Your third lotus footstep on my head.” Although the king of the demons was in a captured, shamed position, Lord Brahma, Prahlada Maharaja and Bali Maharaja’s wife Vindhyavali approached the Lord to ask mercy for Bali Maharaja. Vamanadeva said that in spite of Bali’s being bereft of all material opulences, he remained fixed in his devotional service and true to his word. He released Bali Maharaja and sent him to the planet of Sutala. But the Lord said He would also go to Sutala and remain there always as the doorman of Bali Maharaja.

Bali Maharaja was aware that the time factor was against the demons, so he ordered them to stop fighting the demigods. How do *I* become aware of the direction of the time factor, and how do I decide what to do and when to take action? I try to keep alert to indications coming to me from Prabhupada, Krsna, and the learned and compassionate devotees of ISKCON. I also try to consult the *caitya-guru*, the Lord in the heart, for guidance in what I shall do next. I am always examining my motives and trying to see what my situation is, and whether I should make a change. I have already gone through many changes in ISKCON, mostly directed by the GBC and the grass-roots opinions of the majority of devotees. But years ago I became more convinced that I knew my own location in Prabhupada’s mission, and I carried

it out. Recently I received a letter from a Bhaktin Natalia in Russia. She was very grateful for my book *Chota's Way*. She said it inspired her and gave her confidence. She summed up the message of the book: "Do not be afraid to be yourself. Find your own way in Krsna consciousness." She wrote that for years she had been feeling some confusion in her spiritual life. It seemed to her that only extroverted devotees who liked dynamic activities and public events can be successful in Krsna consciousness. But now, due to *Chota*, she sees that introverted devotees, who like to study and meditate in solitude, can get closer to Krsna and help others also. I wrote back to her and encouraged her. I told her that I had read that two-thirds of the population are extroverts. They charge their batteries by making contact with others, whereas introverted devotees get charged by being alone and practicing their *bhajana*. I wrote that both devotees are dear to Krsna. She should make her own contribution and not be intimidated by the extroverted devotees in Russia. I was very pleased and grateful to receive this letter from a *bhaktin* in Russia. *Chota's Way* is a very autobiographical and personal book about my finding my own niche and vocation in Prabhupada's mission. It was probably written before Natalia was born, but I'm glad it was relevant and gives solace to her. She thanked me and also the Russian translators very much "for these mind- and soul-healing books!" I arrived at my vocation after much soul-searching. I did not collect votes and go by vox populi in deciding what to do. I prayed to Prabhupada that he would accept my psychophysical nature and find it helpful for his mission.

## ***Vrata***

*Vrata* means a vow. When we receive first initiation, we promise the spiritual master before the sacrificial fire, the Deities and the devotees, that we will strictly avoid the four sinful activities and chant at least sixteen rounds of *japa* a day. These are to be taken very seriously without deviation. Devotees also take individual vows. The day before Ekadasi they may think over what *vratas* they will observe on Ekadasi aside from refraining from beans and grains. One plans to do an increased quota of *japa*, or spend Karttika in the holy *dhama*, or stay up all night on Ekadasi, singing *bhajan*s with others and reading aloud.

When a man and woman get married, they take a solemn *vrata* not to separate. Prabhupada liked Rupanuga's getting the man and woman to sign a paper saying that they would never part. So marriage in Krsna consciousness is not a material affair for sense gratification and expansion of family. It is a vow to work together in spiritual life with "double force."

From the life story of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura we learn that he formed a small group in his college days of young men who took a vow to remain celibate all their lives. None of the participants were able to follow through on this except for Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati himself. Srila Prabhupada was shocked when his first disciples broke their initiation or marriage vows (and separated for another partner). But later he was not so shocked but said, "It is not astonishing that

someone leaves Krsna consciousness. It is astonishing that someone stays.”

Bhismadeva, the great *ksatriya* and great devotee, took a vow to remain *brahmacari* his whole life. This was considered a “terrible” vow, and even the demigods were impressed. Bhismadeva was once challenged to a fight by Parasurama, who wanted to fight with him on behalf of a woman who wanted to marry Bhismadeva. But Bhismadeva satisfied Parasurama in the fighting and remained *brahmacari*.

Prabhupada made a vow to the Deities of Radha-Rasabihari in Bombay. There were uncertain dealings before he took possession of the land, so he quickly installed the Deities in a makeshift temporary building. But he prayed to Them and made a promise. He vowed to Radha-Rasabihari that he would build Them a beautiful temple. He fought for this against the landlords and municipality and was true to his promise.

## ***Samsara***

*Samsara* is the repetition of birth and death in material bodies in different species of life because of material attachments. Only in the human form of life is it possible to escape the cycle of birth and death with its concomitant miseries of birth, death, disease and old age, and miseries from one’s mind and body, miseries from other living entities, and miseries from natural disasters. In his song *Guruvastakam* Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, in the first verse, sings *samsara-davanala-lidha-*

*loka*. Here the word *samsara* refers to the spiritual master pouring down a rain of mercy to put out the chain of repeated birth and death. The aim of human life is to stop *samsara* and return back to home, back to Godhead.

## ***Gayatri***

The Gaudiya Vaisnavas chant seven separate mantras as *gayatris*. The first mantra is to the sun god, or to Surya Narayana, who resides in the sun. The second mantra is obeisances to the spiritual master. The third mantra is also to the spiritual master. One meditates on the spiritual master being enthused, “just as he enthuses us.” The next mantra is to Lord Caitanya. The next one is also to Lord Caitanya, who is addressed as the maintainer of the universe. The next two mantras are the Gopala-gayatri and Kama-gayatri, or prayers to Radha and Krsna. The first one addresses Krsna as Govinda, the lover of the *gopis*. The final mantra is to the Master of the senses, who carries the arrows of flowers and is the transcendental Cupid (who is enthused by Radharani).

I have chanted Gayatri with other devotees who finish their mantras within two minutes. I think that is too fast. The Gayatris are not said out loud but within the mind. But they should be meditated on in a concentrated way, meditatively and with reverence. After chanting the Sanskrit mantras, my personal practice is to then chant each of the mantras in the English translation. Six months or a year after the first initiation, the disciple receives second or brahminical initiation. At that time he

or she receives the Gayatri mantras personally (one to one) from the spiritual master. He teaches the disciple how to count the mantras ten times by placing the thumb on the fingers. Receiving Gayatri means coming closer to the spiritual master. This is termed *upaniti*.

## **Pinch**

Prabhupada used to say that if you pinch yourself, that sensation is an awareness of consciousness. And consciousness is a symptom of the spirit-soul. Even an animal responds if it is pinched, and this is one of the proofs that the animals have spirit-souls. We speak of “pinching oneself.” When something happens so extraordinary and dreamlike we can hardly believe it, we pinch ourselves to become more awake. A pinch also refers to a small amount, such as a pinch of spices added to a food preparation. Krsna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* if one has even a pinch of Krsna consciousness, this can save him from the greatest fear (descending to the lower species of life after death).

## **Regulated Schedule**

I have always been regulated. In the early 1980s I used to write down an hour-by-hour schedule of my planned daily activities. I stuck to them unless there was some emergency. It was not spontaneous but was *vaidhi-bhakti* and a little forced.

But it kept me efficient and was a good tool in time management. I would do the same things at the same time every day. I had a variety of responsibilities: GBC secretary, temple president, householder, personal *japa* and reading, and participation in temple programs, counseling, outside preaching programs, and traveling. Now in my old age, I no longer make a written schedule for my day's activities. I keep active but let things flow without too much force. I like it better this way. I am more relaxed and spontaneous. I do less management and concentrate more on my *bhajana*. While there is some spontaneity in other activities, my sleeping and eating are very regulated. The main thing is to always think of Krsna and obey Srila Prabhupada's orders. I try my best to do this.

Srila Prabhupada kept a daily schedule despite frequent jet travel and other obstacles. If he traveled one day to a new place, he would immediately take up his schedule. He went to bed at about 10:00 P.M. He woke (without alarm clock) at 1:00 A.M. and worked on his translation and commentaries on Vaisnava scriptures. He would do this for several hours. At around 5:00 A.M. he would start his *japa*. (I knew this for a fact because I have been his personal secretary and have heard him dictating in the wee hours of the morning and heard him start his *japa* around dawn.) After chanting *japa* he would go on a morning walk. He liked to go to a scenic place, a park or a beach, and he'd be accompanied by some devotees who asked him questions, and he spoke with philosophical answers. He would return from his walk after an hour and first greet the Deities, whose doors were open for him at that time, then sit on the *vyasasana* in the temple while devotees offered him

*guru puja*. After that, he would sing “Jaya Radha-Madhava” and begin his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lecture. When the lecture was finished, he would go to his private quarters and honor breakfast *prasadam* alone. After that, he might meet with the local temple readers or answer mail with his secretary. At 11:00 A.M. he would sit in a *gamcha* and receive his body massage. After an hour he would go and bathe. He would then put on freshly ironed clothes and *tilaka* and sit at his low desk and honor lunch *prasadam*. After that he took a one- or two-hour nap and then rose to meet more devotees or guests. Especially in India, he met many challenges as he attempted to buy land in Bombay, Vrndavana and Mayapura, and gradually construct grand temples. In the evening he would give more *darsanas* until it was time for his brief night’s rest.

### **Radharani’s Daintiness**

I was perturbed over the fact that in my blown up photograph of Radha-Kalachandji in my bedroom (from which I take *darsana* every morning after waking) Radha has such a dainty head and Kalachandji’s head is oversized. I spoke to Baladeva about this, and he gave me a couple of reassurances. He said that the material world is a reflection of how things are in the spiritual world. In the material world we see big men with big heads who have female partners who are small with dainty heads. So why not in the spiritual world? The second assurance he gave me was even stronger. Although Radharani is petite and delicate, She has Krsna under

Her control. This satisfied me, and my *darsanas* are now not “disturbing.” The Kalachandji Deity is 500 years old, and at that time the carvers traditionally made the Krsna Deity with large features. Kalachandji’s Consort was carved more recently, and large features were not the standard. In ISKCON temples, the Radha-Krsna Deities as installed by Prabhupada and his followers are generally elegant and refined, whereas in older Vrndavana temples the Deities are more full-bodied.

## **Flying**

Krsna and Balarama jumped off the top of an 800-mile-high mountain when a demon set fire to the top of it to burn Them. The transcendental Brothers flew or jumped down the long distance and landed without hurting Themselves. At other times Krsna flies on His gigantic bird carrier, Garuda, and goes into battle against an *asura* while seated on Garuda’s wings. The inhabitants of Siddha-loka have attained the mystic potency of *laghima*, by which they become lighter than the lightest. They can fly in their selfsame bodies without any vehicle from one planet to another. Many of the demigods have carriers which fly them, and they can come down from the upper planets to observe things in the middle planets. For example, Lord Brahma rides on a white swan carrier, and other demigods have airplanes that are not fueled by jet fuel but fly by mantras. In the present age they no longer come down to observe things on earth, but they used to hover in the sky and watch Krsna’s exploits such as the *rasa-lila*. As we have already discussed, the demon Salva had a

mystical iron airplane, and Kardama Muni had a palatial flying city and a large flying mansion which he manifested by his yogic powers. Recently the earthlings have invented flying machines, starting with simple propeller-driven craft up to the large 747 commercial jet plane. But the planes made by men are unreliable; they sometimes crash and 200 people at a time die. They are also uncomfortable to ride in. Renounced devotees, however, have taken advantage of modern jet planes, and the commentator described Prabhupada as a “jet-age *parivrajakacarya*” because of his frequently circling the globe in jets to preach Krsna consciousness in cities around the world. The first time Prabhupada flew to San Francisco in 1967 he was greeted by about 50 people, including Allen Ginsberg, who gave Prabhupada a bouquet. Other devotees also gave Prabhupada flowers. As Prabhupada walked through the terminal, he continued receiving flowers, and he reciprocated by giving the flowers back to the people.

### **Why Don't I Go Outdoors; Why Do I Stay in the House?**

I have gotten into the habit of staying indoors. I know it is good for variety's sake, and even good for health, to at least sit outdoors in good weather and take in the sunshine and the sights, flowers, trees, etc. in our yard. We read of Bhaktivinoda Thakura's being sequestered in his *bhajana kutira* in his later life. Maybe I am following something like that. I don't get “antsy” or “cabin fever” by always staying

indoors. The fact that I am crippled also makes me hesitant of going through the trouble of going down the stairs and going outdoors. The good weather is here now, so maybe I'll start trying to go outdoors, at least sitting on the front porch. I do go out frequently in the car, to meet appointments with doctors. There, in waiting rooms, TVs are often playing, or there are newsmagazines, alluring you to look through them. The other patients in the waiting room are often not pleasant to look at, but I compassionately tolerate them, and they are usually friendly. In the *Bhagavatam* it is stated that a devotee should not even look at the face of a materialist or a woman. Christ said that, "Formerly you have heard that you should not commit adultery, but I say you should not even look lustfully at a woman; that is as good as adultery." Devotees who go out and mix in the world are protected by the purification of preaching. But I do not even go out for preaching any more. I play the big *mridanga* and spread my message through the Internet, by publishing books and by attending the small neighborhood festivals that we hold on Vaisnava holidays.

### **Random Glances at the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (11<sup>th</sup> Ed.)**

- discover** (vt.) : **2)** **a** To attain sight or knowledge of for the first time  
**b** FIND OUT // [He discovered he was out of gas]

I discovered a miracle at 26 Second Avenue on the Lower East Side of New York City in 1966. I saw the advertisement for A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's

*Bhagavad-gita* class Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (“transcendental sound vibration”). I attended a meeting at the first opportunity and discovered the Swami and chanted the Hare Krsna mantra to his lead. It was the greatest discovery of my life, and I found it without going to India but just walking in my neighborhood on the Lower East Side. The great discovery had come to me! Reading Prabhupada’s books, I discovered the treasure of Vedic knowledge and Prabhupada’s “personal ecstasies,” his purport commentaries, which gave me the knowledge of Krsna consciousness in *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

**content** (adj) : SATISFIED: // [She was content with her life as it was.]

(v) : To limit (oneself) in requirements, desires or actions.

(adj.) : Feeling or showing satisfaction with one’s possessions, status or situation // [A contented smile].

I consider myself content. I am enthusiastic in Krsna consciousness, even though I have not attained the advanced stage of surrender or chanting the Holy Name. I am satisfied to live in an ashram with a few devotees, although I wish we had a few more to help out with all the duties that have to be covered. I am content with my *asrama* of *sannyasa*.

## **Sadhu Sanga**

The Hare Krsna Sadhu Sanga festival is going on now in North Carolina. It is

the biggest-attended *kirtana* meeting in the United States, with thousands of devotees gathering from all over the country and from other countries also. They have hired out a facility that accommodates the great gathering. Top ISKCON *kirtanias* will lead, and the chorus of thousands of devotees will respond. It is mostly pure *kirtana*, but there will also be speakers glorifying the holy names and encouraging the devotees to chant with absorption. Knowing the potency of the holy names, this event must certainly be acting as a counter-reaction to disasters in the material world, subduing the influence of wars and other anomalies.

The Sadhu Sanga is held at a retreat center indoors. It is a big event logistically, with feeding and accommodations for all the attendees. When Sadhu Sanga posted the announcement for the event, within ten minutes they got so many responses that it was immediately sold out. More applications came, and the event was overbooked.

I cannot attend, but I have been thinking about the Sadhu Sanga. I have been holding my own private *kirtanas*, singing the *maha-mantra* while receiving *darsana* of Radha-Govinda. I do it especially in the last half hour before I take rest at night (around 7:00 P.M.). My good wishes are with this fantastic event, and I feel its auspiciousness, even from a distance.

### **“Hari-bu”**

We call Baladeva’s sister Kathi “Hari-bu.” She is mainly a practicing Buddhist

meditator but has had association with Krsna consciousness, and she used to help Mother Kaulini in cooking at festivals at Gita-nagari. She visits her brother here in Viraha Bhavan and honors *prasadam* and absorbs some of the vibrations of association with the devotees here. Baladeva says Kathi is mostly a “social Buddhist.” She meditates, but her main involvement with the association of Buddhist monks is to go to their monasteries and give service support such as cleaning, organizing events and fundraising. Kathi gave me a book by a Buddhist monk, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, and said that maybe I would become like her, a little influenced by “bu.” I don’t think this will happen because Buddhism is so alien to the personalism of *krsna-bhakti*. I have started reading the book though. This monk, at age 36, was well-established—an abbot of three monasteries. He lived in a very protected environment, with attendants and many, many followers. In order to get deeper realization, he decided to disappear from his sheltered environment and go wandering like the Hindu *sadhus*, who leave all support behind and go wandering in the world. (Narada Muni did this at a young age, and Prabhupada said he did it to gain strength in his faith in God and to enlighten the population.) I have only begun reading the book, but I find it interesting. I contrast the Rinpoche’s radical act of going alone in the world with my own sheltered existence. He sneaks out of the monastery without anyone knowing it and takes a third-class train to a distant city. He finds the train ride frightening and has to use all his powers gained by meditation to steady himself.

I read Rinpoche’s adventures vicariously, knowing that in my old and invalid

age I could never do such a thing. I am crippled, and I have very little life skills. I compare myself at each step with the Rinpoche's adventures, and I am astounded with his courage and his use of meditation to steady himself. Twenty-five years ago it may have been physically (and psychologically) possible for me to have followed this path and just drop out of ISKCON and wander alone. But this is not what Prabhupada wanted. He wanted us to stay in the society of devotees and work together to spread Krsna consciousness. In the Hindu tradition, doing something like the Rinpoche did is called *avadhuta*: abandoning the conventions, even of a *sadhu*, and living an unconventional but holy life. I am captivated by the book by the Rinpoche, not so much his teachings, but his personal adventure. His story is gripping as he tries to throw off his old roles and identity and find his essence. Later in the book (which I haven't finished yet), he describes how he had a near-death experience by eating unclean food.

## **Broom**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura said that one should beat his mind with a shoe 100 times in the morning and beat the mind 100 times at night with a broom. The mind is so uncontrolled that he gave this example of the constant vigilance that a devotee has to exert to keep the *chanchala* mind under control and fixed on Krsna.

In Gorakhpur, Srila Prabhupada showed by example how his devotees should

clean the floor. He didn't use a broom but used a clean wet rag and squatted, Indian-style, and vigorously wiped the floor until it was clean. It was a temple marble floor. After he did it, his followers did the same.

In the festival of Ratha-yatra, a distinguished person uses a broom to sweep the path before Lord Jagannatha's cart. In Lord Caitanya's time, King Prataparudra swept Jagannatha's path with a golden-sticked broom and softened the heart of Lord Caitanya toward him, making Him inclined to give the King His mercy.

In "The Cleansing of the Gundica Temple," (*C.c., Madha-Lila*, Chapter 12) before Ratha-yatra Lord Caitanya led His associates in cleaning the temple where Lord Jagannatha would come after His procession and stay for a week in the mood of Vrndavana. Lord Caitanya led the devotees in first cleaning the temple and other buildings by cleaning the dirt with brooms. After He had done a thorough cleansing with brooms, He then threw water everywhere and then dried the floors and walls off with cloth, including His own clothes. When they were cleaning with brooms, Lord Caitanya said He would see how much dirt each devotee had gathered. He commended the devotees who gathered the most dirt and reprimanded those who collected only a little dirt.

When I was a younger devotee (but a temple president in Boston and later in Dallas), I would take part in cleaning the temple rooms and the bathroom. I would use a broom and then also a wet rag. Prabhupada had written in a letter that we should be "revolutionary clean," and I enjoyed getting down from my official post as leader and scrubbing and cleaning the bathrooms. I did this late at night.

Prabhupada wrote that in remote places in India, women who practice black arts know the ability of flying on an uprooted tree from one place to another. It is easy to make a connection between these women and the real or mythical witches in the West who fly on brooms.