

## ***Free Write Journal #43***

### **Free Writes**

#### **Bhisma's Passing Away**

In our out-loud reading at mealtimes, we are hearing the Second Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. It is very technical about the creation of the cosmos. We find it less interesting than the First Canto, which is filled with juicy sections such as Maharaja Pariksit's punishing Kali, who he found beating a cow and a bull, Queen Kunti's prayers, and the passing away of Bhisma. King Yudhishthira was lamenting the loss of millions of lives in the battle of Kuruksetra. He felt that he was guilty for their deaths because the war had been fought to reinstate him as the emperor. Even Lord Krsna couldn't pacify him with instructions. Krsna wanted him to hear from Bhismadeva, who was lying on a "bed of arrows" about to pass away. The Pandavas, Lord Krsna, and many other important persons gathered around Bhismadeva. Bhisma told Yudhishthira that he should not be distressed about the mass killings of the soldiers and others in the Kuruksetra War. He said it was all due to the will of Krsna, the Supreme Lord, and no one could understand His plan. It was better not to even inquire into it. Yudhishthira felt somewhat pacified by Bhisma's enlightened

answers.

Bhisma then prepared himself for dying. He was very fortunate and pleased that his worshipable Lord, Sri Krsna, was present before him in his last hours. He fixed his gaze on Krsna and offered prayers. He included prayers for the mercy of the *gopis* of Vrndavana. His worshipable Deity was Krsna in His two-armed form. He remembered Krsna on the battlefield as the chariot driver of Arjuna and how he fought against them. Bhismadeva had pierced Krsna's body with arrows, but the Lord wasn't pained. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, analyzing the situation as a devotee of *madhurya-rasa*, says Bhisma's arrows piercing Krsna were like the bites a lover makes in passion upon his or her partner. These bites are enjoyed in amorous desire.

Although Bhisma was in a very awkward situation not conducive to teaching, he spoke on many philosophical topics, including *varnasrama dharma* and what to think of at the time of death. Bhisma had a boon that he wouldn't pass away until he willed it, and he took full advantage of Krsna's presence before him and had a glorious passing away to attain the eternal Vaikuntha planets.

## **Chest X-ray**

Today I am going for a chest X-ray. For ten days I have had first a severe sore throat, then a chest cough, then a mucus-y runny nose. I gargled with salt water, drank cough medicine, sucked medicinal lozenges, and tried to get extra rest. But after ten days, the symptoms are still lingering. So we are getting a prescription from

our Nurse Practitioner and going for the chest X-ray. Our former Nurse Practitioner would probably immediately prescribe antibiotics, but the new man is more strict and doesn't know us very well. The antibiotics would be to avoid pneumonia (again). Every time I get pneumonia, my lungs don't come back all the way in recovery. And my COPD gets worse.

### **Devotee's Question**

Muktavandhya submitted to me a recorded inquiry for me by a devotee in Boston. She is a disciple of His Holiness Niranjana Maharaja, but he has so many disciples and is so busy that he cannot answer individual inquiries. I recorded a message to his disciple Dina-dayadri devi dasi and said I felt honored to serve my esteemed Godbrother by attempting to answer her question. She asked how to understand when the spiritual master is giving the disciple his mercy, and when she should try to use her own intelligence to decide what to do. She also asked about mercy coming from Prabhupada and from advanced devotees that she has access to. I replied by saying we should act using our own intelligence, taking the responsibility to resolve our questions. Yet at the same time, we should have faith that we are receiving the mercy of guru, Prabhupada, and advanced Vaisnavas we have access to. I told her of an instruction Prabhupada gave me when I was Temple President of Boston. We were searching for a new building and I told Prabhupada about it. He wrote back and said that regarding the purchase of the building, we

should “pray and endeavor.” To me this meant he wanted us devotees to practically work at the situation by ourselves, but simultaneously know that the result would come about by Krsna and guru’s mercy, through prayer. I wanted Dina-dayadri to take up this short quote by Prabhupada as her own motto for living and acting: “*Pray and endeavor.*”

### **The Sunday Feast**

In the beginning in 1966, Prabhupada started the “Sunday Love Feast,” and at first it was primarily an in-house function. Prabhupada cooked the preparations and served devotees in his room, and at the very beginning we even left him to clean up the pots! But shortly devotees like Kirtanananda and Acyutananda learned how to cook. The approximately twelve devotees enjoyed the feast as a reward for their austerities during the week. There were many fancy preparations different than the daily menu, and the devotees relished several plates with a kind of sense gratification. They ate with gusto. Gradually Swamiji told them that they should invite the public to come for the Feasts and make it a preaching event. After all, everyone likes to take *prasadam*, so why should the devotees consume it all themselves? As soon as they advertised and invited guests, many people started coming to the temple on Sunday afternoon and enjoyed a free vegetarian feast of food offered to Krsna. Over the years the Sunday Feast attendance has increased to where now hundreds (or even thousands) of people participate. A notable transition

has taken place where the devotees enjoy sitting down next to interested guests and answering their questions about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the congenial atmosphere of sharing *prasadam* and preaching. The preaching has become even more blissful than the initial almost-greedy consumption of the special preparations on Sunday.

### **A Random Look at the Index to *Srila Prabhupada-lilamṛta***

*Back to Godhead*, p. 187

**“One time, while he was walking on a secluded street, pursuing his *Back to Godhead* duties, a stray cow—the kind commonly seen wandering the streets of any Indian town or city—suddenly charged him, goring his side with her horn, and knocked him down. At first he couldn't get up, and no one came to help him. As he lay there, he wondered why it had happened.**

**“Summer came, and the 110-degree heat made it almost intolerable to spend time out of doors. Hot, dust-laden winds blew in the city streets. Streetside hawkers closed their businesses during the day. In early May, during 112-degree heat, a man collapsed in the street and died of heatstroke. But Abhay ignored the heat and the ordinary limitations of the body.**

**“One day while delivering *Back to Godhead* to various**

**addresses in the city, Abhay suddenly began reeling, half unconscious, overcome by the heat. At that very moment, an acquaintance of his, a man he had approached during his preaching, happened to be passing by in his car, and he took Abhay to a doctor. The doctor diagnosed him as a victim of heatstroke and ordered him to rest.”**

Here we see the severe austerities that Abhay underwent as he singlehandedly produced and distributed his *Back to Godhead* newspaper in New Delhi.

Abhay had left his home and taken to the *vanaprastha* order. Prabhupada wrote an article about the entanglement of household affairs and also the false renunciation of family life by “monkey renunciation.” He wrote that the real remedy lies in the act of accepting the service of the lotus feet of the Lord. Real renounced life, therefore, was possible without going into the forest. Even if one remained in the dress of a householder, he could be freed from cares and anxieties by engaging himself in devotional service. Prabhupada was poor, and he was working singlehandedly. His spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, had said that if only one soul could be turned into a pure devotee, his mission would be a success. Yet sometimes Abhay became overwhelmed when he thought of how small he was, how much work had to be done on behalf of Krsna, and how difficult it was to convince even one conditioned soul.

**Abhay Charan De**, poem by on Bhaktisiddhanta's Appearance Day

p. 79-80

**“For Abhay, however, the glory of his ‘Sree Vyas Puja Homage’ came when the poem reached Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and it gave him pleasure. One stanza specifically made Srila Bhaktisiddhanta so happy that he made a point of showing it to all of his guests:**

**“Absolute is sentient,  
Thou hast proved,  
Impersonal calamity  
Thou hast removed.**

**“Somehow, in this simple couplet, Abhay had captured the essence of his spiritual master's preaching against the Mayavadis, and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta took it as an indication of how well Abhay knew the mind of his Gurudeva. Abhay was delighted when he heard that the couplet was pleasing to his spiritual master. One of Abhay's Godbrothers compared this verse by Abhay to a verse in which Rupa Gosvami had expressed the inner thinking of Caitanya**

**Mahaprabhu and had thus moved Him to ecstasy.**

**“Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati also found the essay pleasing, and he showed it to some of his confidential devotees. He instructed the editor of *The Harmonist*, ‘Whatever he writes, publish it.’”**

This was a wonderful occasion for Abhay. By his writing in English, he had caught his spiritual master’s attention, and Bhaktisiddhanta gave him high praise. This was an indication of what Abhay would do in the future with his voluminous writing and publishing of books, including the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. In the “Concluding Words” of *Caitanya-caritamrta*, our Prabhupada writes that he is confident that his spiritual master is pleased by his presentation of the work. Prabhupada wrote for the pleasure of his spiritual master, and for the enlightenment of all conditioned souls. What a wonderful event it was in 1935, in the presence of his spiritual master, when he so much pleased him by his writing.

## **Free Writes**

### ***Danda***

A *sannyasi* carries a *danda*. The Vaisnava *sannyasis* are *tridandi*, which means they have three bamboo sticks wrapped around with saffron cloth. The impersonalist *sannyasis* are *ekadanda*; they carry *dandas* with only one bamboo

stick covered in cloth. (Actually, the Vaisnava *sannyasis* carry four sticks wrapped in cloth—three sticks stand for body, mind, and words, and the fourth, center stick stands for the *jiva*.)

As a *sannyasi* I had an unpleasant experience with my *danda* while I was distributing *Back to Godhead* in the streets of Tucson, Arizona. My Godbrother Suresvara was distributing on another street, and I was alone on a street lined with stores. I approached passersby and tried to interest them in purchasing a *BTG*. Suddenly, from out of one of the stores came the store owner. He ran up to me in a furious mood. He yelled at me and called me names like “Faggot!”, “Commie!” etc. He was irrational and uncontrolled. I should have run away from him, but I stood my ground. He grabbed my *danda* from my hands and began beating me on the head with it. He finally broke it and continued hitting me. I finally ran away from him. I felt hurt and wanted some retribution. I looked for a policeman and finally found one. I told him that I had been assaulted, and my “religious stick” had been broken over my head. He told me to get on the back of his motorcycle, and he drove me a few blocks and dropped me off at another store and told me to wait. I sat down and waited, but the minutes passed and he didn’t return. I figured he wasn’t going to take any action, and so I finally left the store. I phoned Karandhara in Los Angeles. He was the in-charge man of ISKCON Los Angeles and someone I looked up to. I told him what had happened. He asked me if I had been physically hurt, and I said, “No, not much.” But I had lost my spirit for staying out on the streets. He suggested I come back to the Los Angeles temple. I met with Suresvara, and we both went back

to Los Angeles. I gathered some new bamboo sticks and made myself a new *danda*. But it was a bit of a traumatic experience, being attacked by such an irrational demon.

I had a personal relationship with my *danda*. Prabhupada liked to see his *sannyasi* disciples carrying their *dandas*. He said we should carry the *danda* and our bead bag. That left you with both hands occupied and made you unable to do much else with your hands. I had an assistant who carried my other belongings. The *danda* was a symbol of renunciation, and I carried it with pride. (When I say I carried my *danda* with pride, I mean pride in being part of the renounced order. But sometimes a *sannyasi* might feel pride in a social sense, thinking himself higher socially in the hierarchy than non-*sannyasis*. Such an attitude is completely against the humility and meekness that a Vaisnava is supposed to possess.)

There is hearsay that after ten years a *sannyasi* may not carry his *danda* anymore. I have stopped carrying mine, but I still keep it in my room. The day after Prabhupada gave me my *danda*, I asked him on a morning walk whether we should offer our food to the *danda*. He laughed and said no.

Lord Nityananda broke Caitanya Mahaprabhu's *danda* in three places and threw it in the river. He thought Caitanya Mahaprabhu was above the designation of *sannyasa* and needn't carry a *danda*. When Lord Caitanya found out that His *danda* was broken, He became upset. Lord Nityananda told Caitanya Mahaprabhu that He had fallen down in ecstasy upon the *danda* and had broken it. But Lord Caitanya remained angry and walked apart from His associates, and entered Jagannatha Puri

alone.

## **Disruption**

Workers are coming today to do major construction in my bathroom. I will be displaced for several days and move down to the guest room on the first floor. I will use the potty and the first-floor shower there. I will be away from my books and papers and be displaced. To occupy myself, Baladeva suggested I keep a “refugee journal.” I will be disoriented. I am so comfortable in my chair in my room, but I can’t use it while the workers are here. I will try not to be “spaced out” but keep myself occupied in reading, listening to Prabhupada’s tapes, chanting extra, and possibly dictating of my experience while being displaced from my home room. If I were a traveler, it would be something like being stuck in an airport for nine hours, for a long time. I have not been used to that. We have been waiting almost a year for these repairmen to come and install a handicapped bathroom. Now it is finally, actually happening.

## ***The Radha-Govinda Worship Book***

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I’m happy today I received five new sets of clothes for Radha-Govinda, all made in Vrndavana. I’m so greedy for these. And three crowns for Radha. More, give me more! All right, you snipers, you call it playing with dolls. I call it *seva* of the

Lord and His Consort. Make Them a throne, and one for Srila Prabhupada, that's my latest request to friends in Vrndavana. Then you worship Them and you'll know it was made in Vrndavana, and you can feel you are there in separation. They can bring some of Vraja here and I'll stay and worship, while the rain beats on the skylight like peaceful, rhythmic music.

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Krsna, Krsna, when I dress You, I hope You are happy. Please be with me. I have the *arca-vigraha* Krsna. Srila Prabhupada says, "Are we such fools that we are worshiping a lump of metal?" I love that remark. Logically it's open to attack, and yet it's disarming and aggressive in its own way. We are *not* such fools. We can prove in various ways that we are capable philosophers and human beings. So how could we do such a foolish thing as you accuse us, worship dead matter? We worship Krsna, who appears in metal because we are not so fortunate to see Him in *sac-cid-ananda vigraha*. At least we are not so unfortunate as to deny His presence on the altar. Dear Lord, I do not have to think about this. I just need to worship You and see the young smiles of You and Radha. And sometimes hear of Your pastimes. If not, serve You in silence.

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Starting this session late. I spent extra time with the new dresses from Vrndavana. The first one I tried had no Velcro on Krsna's *dhoti* and top—I couldn't

make it work without that. Radha, as usual, was more cooperative, or let us say She was easier to dress. They both look splendid in delicious pink-maroon color. Krsna smiled at me when His dressing was complete. Their forms are also shining, indicate that the daily cleaning of Their forms is going well. Their transcendental bodies. It is a very nice service They give me. “Are we such fools that we are worshiping a lump of brass?” Krsna’s lotus feet show nicely with these new outfits. He has long sleeves, so I didn’t give Him a *chadar*. But Radha needed one.

While tending to Their Lordships, I listened to our reading of *Bhajana-rahasya*. It is harder to pay attention to than the dramas of Rupa Gosvami. I’d like to be able to return to them again. They are so light-hearted. But I’ll stay with *Bhajana-rahasya* and its concentrated pouring-out of *sastra* and philosophy on sacred topics such as how to chant the holy name and remember Radha and Krsna throughout the whole day. That is real meditation, not dark cloud contemplation. Or we will meditate on the dark cloud known as Ghanashyama, darkish like a cloud, Krsna. Vrndavana, Vrndavana, coming to me in pieces of cloth for the Deities. Srila Prabhupada wearing a hat made in Vrndavana. The pastimes of Lord Krsna will get nicer and nicer. It is one of the main reasons I don’t want to travel. I need to be home to worship these Deities. I will have to travel sometimes, and then I don’t think anyone can worship Them. I can’t take Them with me. So I will have to put Them into some kind of *samadhi*, or sleep, but I don’t like the idea of Their being alone in this house. Maybe one of the devotees can take care of Them.

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Taste is a funny thing. Gopi-manjari undressed my Radha-Govinda *murtis* when she cleaned Them. When she re-dressed Them, she did it in her own style. She placed Radha and Krsna further apart than I do. She placed Krsna's necklace not in between His arms but lying over His left arm. She exposed more of Srimati Radharani's bosom than I do when fitting Her blouse. She placed Radharani's cape differently, and the *chadar* seemed to be placed more for decoration than for keeping Her warm.

It occurred to me that if I was serving as a *pujari* in a temple, I would have to follow the standard of the head *pujari*, or some long tradition in that temple. I would even be reprimanded if I did it in a different way. Or if I myself were the head *pujari*, I would reprimand someone else and tell them, "You're being whimsical. You cannot place Radha and Krsna like that, you cannot dress Them like that." Thank God we can worship the Deities in our home to our hearts' content.

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Gold and soft purple are the themes of Their Lordships' new clothes from Vrndavana, worn for the first time today. When you decorate your face in the mirror, both you and the image become beautified. Similarly, when you decorate Radha-Govinda, you become more beautiful. They are clean, and I am pleased for that. This is how to occupy yourself, this *puja*, this service. Srila Prabhupada looks very handsome in his warm, brown *chadar*, brown knit cap. May these Deities also warm

my heart, just as the radiator is warming my body against the chill. We listen to the reading of the *Bhajana-rahasya*, now on the second verse of the *Siksastakam*, with various references as to how we commit *aparadhas* and become *durdaivam*, unfortunate and unable to chant the Names purely.

## Free Writes

**inspire** (*v.*) : to influence, move, or guide by divine or supernatural  
inspiration

: to exert an animating, enlivening or exalting influence on

I am inspired by Srila Prabhupada. He is the single person most influential in guiding me with thoughts from the absolute truth. Krsna also inspires me to chant the holy name and to take *darsana* of Radha-Govinda. These are not ordinary influences. The root meaning of the word “inspire” is “to breathe.” I believe Prabhupada is breathing in me, and so is Krsna as I chant His holy names. What *in particular* inspires me from these masters? I am inspired just by the *idea* of chanting. I believe what is stated in the *sastras* and spoken by Prabhupada about the potency of the holy names. My own chanting is not done on a high level of inspiration, but I have a real gut feeling and attachment to the process. It is so easy and sublime, even from my present imperfect performance. I am inspired by Prabhupada’s kindness to me, and especially the intimacy I had with him in the early years before ISKCON grew into thousands of disciples and a worldwide

organization.

Still I am inspired by hearing his books read out loud at mealtimes. Now we are hearing in the Third Canto Uddhava's speaking to Vidura about the pastimes of Krsna. It is a very inspiring section of the *Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada several times gave me the order to write. I am inspired by that instruction and love to do the writing service. A Godbrother asked me whether I, at 80 years old, have anything left I want to accomplish? I want to keep writing, books and my weekly *Journal*. I feel inspired to do it, and this must come from Prabhupada and Krsna. I am inspired to read the memoirs of my Godbrothers and Godsisters and hear them speak memories of our spiritual master. Not only his initiated disciples but the newer generation of *sisya* disciples also inspire me when they exhibit their loving service to Prabhupada.

- ironic** (adj.) : relating to, containing or constituting irony. Also see: **irony**
- irony** (n.) : incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result : an event or result marked by such incongruity.

An example of irony is when a soldier survives battles in war, but then in peacetime he trips in the street and dies of a physical accident. It is ironic that he survived so many dangers in war, but then in peacetime a simple mishap caused his death. It's ironic that in the West so many people who have never heard of Krsna became serious devotees of the Lord, whereas in India so many people have heard of

Krsna but they are contaminated by Mayavadi ideas and therefore could never become a devotee. It is ironic that in the “land of religion” there is so much lack of pure devotion to Krsna and the teachings of impersonalism are predominant and widespread. It is ironic that the land of *dharma* (Bharata-varsa) is running after Western materialism rather than spreading God consciousness, which is the real wealth of India and which was once predominant in former ages.

**encyclopedia** (n.) : a work that contains information on all branches of knowledge or treats comprehensively a particular branch of knowledge, usually in articles arranged alphabetically, often by subject.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was said to be “a living encyclopedia.” But he is an exception. Some writers have read the entire dictionary in order to increase their vocabulary and knowledge. But the words in the dictionary and encyclopedia are often not related to Krsna consciousness, and so studying them is not necessary. Three words are sufficient: *bhagavan*, *bhakti* and *bhakta*. *Bhagavan* refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *bhakti* is the process of loving devotional service to the Lord; and *bhakta* is the devotee who renders service to Bhagavan. In addition to knowing these three words, Prabhupada said a devotee could memorize a minimum amount of words from the *Bhagavad-gita*, and that would be sufficient to defeat the impersonalists of South India. A complete collection of Vedic knowledge

(military arts, Ayurveda, and any type of knowledge, along with spiritual knowledge) is contained in the *Puranas*, and one who studies them can learn all essential knowledge for going home, back to Godhead.

### ***Arati***

John Endler was very impressed watching Haridasa from Guyana perform an *arati* to the Gaura-Nitai Deities. Haridasa stood up very clean, very tall and performed the *arati* in a brahminical way. He began by blowing the conchshell powerfully and clearly. First he offered the incense, then the ghee wick flame. He circled the ghee wick toward the Deities and then offered it to the devotees in attendance. He was very graceful and sober. Then he offered the bathing water and handkerchief to the Deity and sprinkled the water on the assembled devotees. And then the flower, which he passed on to the devotees who were gathered watching and singing the *arati* after offering it to Gaura-Nitai. Finally he waved the yak-tail whisk and the peacock fan, and in turn waved them to the assembled devotees. Everything was done soberly and with grace, and John was much impressed. He had never seen an *arati* performed before. The quality of the *arati* depends on the devotion and attention of the *pujari*. Haridasa had both of these qualities. He did not perform it in a mechanical way but with devotion. In *The Nectar of Devotion* it is described that in temple worship six *aratis* a day should be offered to the *arca-vigraha*. In home worship one can offer a single *arati* during the day.

## **An Appreciation**

I read an email from a GBC *sannyasi*. He wrote that he was a “faithful, appreciative reader of *Free Write Journal*.” It brought to his mind a quotation: “You have to relax, write what you write. It sounds easy, but it’s really, really hard. One of the things it took me longest to learn was to trust in the writing process.” (Novelist Diane Setterfield)

He also wrote that he likes my “honest, personal descriptions of what old age and disease bring.” I was relieved because a critic might say I am seeking pity, or I am expressing self-pity. But my Godbrother wrote, “Your revelations allow your younger (but also elderly) Godbrothers to glimpse the realities in store for them, sooner than later—that is, if their stay in the present body is destined to continue.”

I was very moved by this appreciation, coming from an innovative and responsible preacher who is doing much more than I am. It is encouragement like this that keeps me enthusiastic to continue the writing process.

## **Radhanath Swami’s Visit**

I received a rare, once-a-year visit from Radhanath Swami. We have a mutual friendship. We spoke together for an hour and a half. He had just been listening to a two-hour recording of a conversation between Prabhupada and Allen Ginsberg. With all the details still in his mind, he shared the conversation with me. He appreciated Prabhupada’s expertise in speaking to a person who likes to chant but disagrees with Prabhupada on many points. He said Prabhupada was so wonderfully

flexible in encouraging Allen, in telling him he was not an ordinary person.

Radhanath Maharaja spoke of the conversation with animation and much laughter.

After our talk we went to the kitchen table and shared lunch. He had brought three devotees with him. Baladeva prepared one of Radhanath Swami's favorite meals.

Maharaja, as well as his friends, all took seconds, even though it wasn't part of the vegan diet, which so many devotees like to give to Radhanath Maharaja. He made obeisances to me. Because of my crippled condition, I could not make prostrated obeisances back but leaned my head on his shoulders and neck and embraced him.

Maharaja and I have been in touch for many years. When he lived in New Vrindaban before taking *sannyasa*, I used to visit the farm, and we appreciated each other's association very much. He has gone on to become a world-famous preacher, having thousands of disciples and meeting many dignitaries. He inspires large projects such as the Chowpatty temple in Mumbai and the Govardhan Ecovillage project, where they have constructed temples and buildings which are facsimiles of the holy places in Vrindavana. He also started the Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mumbai, opened an eye clinic in Barsana, Vrindavana, etc., etc. Over 40 years, coming from being an unknown *brahmacari* to one of ISKCON's most influential preacher, he maintains a genuine, simple humility. His affection for me warms my heart, and I feel the same about him.

## Random Looks at the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*

**“Unable to see Him, Hiranyakasipu said, ‘I have searched the entire universe, but I could not find Visnu, who has killed my brother. Therefore, He must certainly have gone to that place from which no one returns. [In other words, He must now be dead.]”**

(S.B. 8.19.12)

Hiranyakasipu, being an atheist, thought that because Lord Visnu was not visible to him, that the Lord was dead. Even today many people follow the philosophy that God is dead. But God is never dead. Even the living entity, who is part of God, never dies.

There is certainly a spiritual kingdom, and if the living entity goes there he never returns to this material world. Materially speaking, every living entity dies; death is inevitable. But the *bhaktas* either take birth again, either in a rich family or in a family of the purest *brahmanas* just to finish their development in spiritual consciousness. Those who have completed the course of Krsna consciousness and are free from material desire return to the abode of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Any person who goes back to home, back to Godhead, does not return to this material world. Actually, Lord Visnu thought that wherever He might go, Hiranyakasipu would follow Him. Therefore it would be better for Him to enter into

the core of Hiranyakasipu’s heart, for then, because of his power to see only externally, he would not be able to see the Lord. The Lord was not acting in fear of Hiranyakasipu; rather because of compassion, Lord Visnu was in anxiety about how to act for Hiranyakasipu’s welfare.

**“King Prthu said: O gentle *suta*, *magadha* and other devotee offering prayers, the qualities of which you have spoken are not distinct in me. Why then should you praise me for all these qualities when I do not shelter these features? I do not wish for these words meant for me to go in vain, but it is better that they be offered to someone else.”** (S.B. 4.15.22)

The prayers offered to King Prthu were appropriate, for he was a *saktyavesa-avatara* of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because the qualities were not yet manifest, however, King Prthu very humbly asked why the devotees should praise him with such exalted words. He warned that one should not be accepted as an incarnation of the Personality of Godhead without having the godly qualities. At the present moment there are so many so-called incarnations of the Personality of Godhead, but they have no godly qualities. King Prthu desired that his real characteristics in the future might justify such words of prayer. Although there was no fault in the prayers offered, Prthu Maharaja indicated that such prayers should not be offered to an unfit person who pretends to be an incarnation of the Supreme

Personality of Godhead.

**“O Vyasadeva, in that association and by the mercy of those great Vedantists, I could hear them describe the attractive activities of Lord Krsna. And thus listening attentively, my taste for hearing “of the Personality of Godhead increased at every step.” (S.B. 1.5.26)**

At first the young boy Narada took the food remnants from the *bhakti-vedantas* staying at his mother’s place. But then he started listening to their conversations about Lord Krsna, and his taste for hearing about Him increased at every step. Lord Krsna is attractive not only in His personal features, but also in His transcendental activities . . . . One can attain to the highest perfection of life simply by attentive hearing of the transcendental pastimes of the Lord from the right sources, as Sri Narada heard them from the pure devotees (*bhakti-vedantas*) in his previous life. This process of hearing in the association of the devotees is especially recommended in this age of quarrel (Kali).”

## **Japa Quotes**

From *Japa Reform Notebook*:

**“Guides of the holy name, please grant the extra spark of mercy to the slow chanters of Your holy names! Ah, but You have**

**already done this! Lord Caitanya has gone to unlimited lengths to deliver us by this easiest and sublime method. It is up to us. Now if we refuse! No, it is unspeakable. We must accept—we will not remain so fallen.**

**“The Vaisnava poet declares that he must have been cursed by Yamaraja and therefore has no taste for devotional practices. Yet it is also true that Srila Prabhupada has come and rescued us from our own distaste for *bhakti*. By his chanting and dancing we are attracted, and by his order we go on patiently, placing the *maha-mantra* on our heads and aspiring to serve Him.”** (p. 129)

From *Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name*:

**“Chanting the holy name is not in itself an *aparadha*, but if a chanter is committing sins on the strength of chanting, if he is sustaining himself by the mercy of the chanting, then his chanting becomes filled with *aparadha*. This is what it means when we say that when watering the *bhakti-lata*, the plant of devotion, we may be watering the weeds at the same time. By chanting, we can be committing sin. Of course, the solution to this is not to stop chanting, but to stop the sin.”** (p.106)

From *Japa Transformations*:

**“Japa is an open field in which you enter and do the best you can. With a physical handicap, I feel impinged upon and can’t roam deeply into the contemplation of the Hare Krsna mantra. So I cut my losses and my lamentations, and the bare mantras move along quickly. I sit back in the chair and watch the count rise. I draw satisfaction from the accumulation of rounds and don’t get depressed by the lack of freedom to go deeper. I trust that Krsna knows I’m trying. People who chant with a handicap have to remain brave and keep optimistic about the efficacy of the chanting. I should take stock in my sincerity and plead to Krsna that I may do better. I take satisfaction in the accumulation and the fact that I am not stopped by the impairment. All will go well somehow or other, and Krsna will take the difficulties into account. He wants to see me trying, and that is my success. A person who does not give up despite difficulty is a good chanter. Try to reach further, improve the quality of the names and think of Krsna and Radha. I let a certain sorrow set in, but I restrain it also. It is a kind of war, or at least a struggle, and in times of difficulty, gains are made.”** (pp. 103-104)